

Communities of Vision & Action

*Systems Change
Through Minnesota's
Community Transition
Interagency Committees*

The College of Education
& Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Minnesota  Children
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Preface

At a recent meeting of representatives from Minnesota's model transition demonstration sites, we had a great conversation about accomplishments over the last several years. We also discussed barriers we continue to face on a daily basis. When asked what he had learned over the last year, one member of a Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC) and Transition Demonstration Site project replied, "Asking someone to change is the hardest thing you'll ever ask them to do." We've always known deep inside that this simple fact is true.

Change requires commitment. It requires persistence. It requires a fiery passion, deep in our hearts, that burns its way into everything we do. And, quite honestly, change is *really* hard. But it's our passion that spurs us to act on our deepest convictions and to ride the waves of dissent created by those around us who do not believe change is possible. Changing the way we think, the way we act, the way we create the future - for our children, our grandchildren, and our great, great grandchildren - is at the very core of our work. Change is about making good things happen for every single child and young adult in our communities.

We believe this, because we have seen people who have put these values and concepts into action. It is this passion and conviction in the need for change that has been the driving force behind the activities of twenty-seven model transition demonstration sites over the past three years. Since the fall of 1991, the state of Minnesota has had a federal Transition Systems Change grant. The purpose of this grant was to improve the way transition services are provided to students with disabilities and their families in Minnesota over a five-year period. For the last three years, the people who serve on Minnesota's Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) have responded with enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication to being a part of the grant activities that were implemented. They have used their creativity, their networking skills, and their belief in making good things happen for kids to improve services in their communities.

This publication represents a compilation of the activities, results, and lessons learned by the transition demonstration sites. We hope you will learn about change from reading their stories and use the information to help improve transition services in your community.

Pam Stenhjem, Project Coordinator
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Introduction

In 1991, Minnesota received a federal Transition Systems Change Grant that lasted five years. The purpose of this grant was to improve Minnesota's system of planning and services for youth with disabilities making the transition from school to adult life. The grant focused on individual, community, and state level planning and services. In support of this grant, Minnesota already had many things in place, including our State Transition Interagency Committee (1984); Interagency Office on Transition Services (1985); Legislation for Community Transition Interagency Committees (1987); Legislation for Individual Transition Planning (1987); and Technical Assistance for CTICs (1988).

Minnesota legislation requires a transition plan for every student with a disability beginning by age fourteen or ninth grade. Each plan must address a student's transition goals and needs in five areas:

- Home living
- Community participation
- Recreation and leisure
- Post-secondary education
- Employment and job training

Legislation also requires the development of community-focused, community-based transition committees made up of parents, students, educators, and community service providers. These groups, called Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs), have been in operation since 1987.

With seventy-five active CTICs in place, we had an excellent system to use for demonstrating new strategies and best practices in transition services for youth with disabilities. Each CTIC was awarded a small amount of funding to improve local transition services. Additional funds were awarded on a competitive basis for CTICs who wanted to make a greater impact by focusing on one of seven specific areas for systems change. Twenty-seven demonstration grants were awarded on an annual basis between 1993 and 1996. Each site was required to submit a report summarizing their activities and accomplishments, which are shared in this guide. All the demonstration sites are listed below within the content areas chosen for their grant:

1 Develop a process for the ongoing collection of post-school follow-up information.

- Chisago & Pine County CTIC

1/ Develop a process to determine what services students with disabilities need after leaving high school and communicate this information among adult service providers.

- Minneapolis CTIC
- Owatonna CTIC

3 Establish a system for assuring that students with disabilities and their families are involved in transition planning at the individual and community levels.

- Anoka County CTIC
- Benton-Steams CTIC
- Goodhue County CTIC
- Northland CTIC
- Northwest Hennepin CTIC
- Root River Interagency Council
- Runestone Area CTIC
- Suburban Ramsey CTIC

- West Metro CTIC
 - Winona County CTIC
- 4 Develop a process to address the transition needs of individuals with disabilities and families with diverse needs and cultures.
- Freeborn County CTIC
 - Little Crow
 - Watonwan County CTIC
- 5 Based on a community needs assessment, create or expand the availability of at least one of the following post-school environments for youth in transition: employment, independent living, post-secondary education, community education, health services, transportation, or recreation and leisure opportunities.
- Cannon Valley CTIC
 - DuluthCTIC
 - Midwest Special Education Cooperative CTIC
 - Rochester CTIC
- 6 Develop and expand processes and strategies for meeting the transition needs of students with all disabilities in the context of secondary school programs in collaboration with community services.
- Freeborn County CTIC
- 7 Develop a smooth transition process using interagency linkages between key agencies of education, county social services, and vocational rehabilitation services.
- Grant County Child and Youth Council
 - Morrison County Interagency Coordinating Council
 - Northern Lights CTIC
 - Rum River Special Education Cooperative
 - Waseca County CTIC
 - West Central CTIC

Organization of This Guide

In order to make this guide clear as well as useful, each demonstration site is organized with the same categories of information: an overview, a statement of need, activities undertaken to meet the need, results, and reflections on what was learned. A contact person is listed along with information about the ages of the students served and unique features of the project.

This guide was developed for use by many groups, both within and outside Minnesota. It is meant primarily to be a resource and networking tool for Community Transition Interagency Committees. We hope CTICs will find others working on issues similar to their own and network with them. This guide can also be used as a resource for Minnesota's emerging School-to-Work local and regional partnerships as they begin to address collaboration and systems change across the state. And finally, the guide can be used across the country as an example of the power of communities working to improve services for children and youth.

Summary of Reflections

The Community Transition Interagency Committees that participated in these model transition demonstration site activities have accomplished a great deal over the last three years. Through their projects, activities, and collaborative efforts much has been learned about what it takes make effective, lasting systems change.

Throughout this document, you will find reflections from each of the demonstration sites regarding what they learned and what they would like others to know about creating new systems, specifically concerning their individual projects. This section summarizes their insights (what may help others working on similar

issues) and their hindsight (what could have been done differently). It is our hope these summaries will give you a clear picture of why it's so important to continue addressing new models and systems.

Student and Family Involvement

When it comes to involving students and families, we've learned that early and continuous involvement in a student's education is most effective. We found out that although many parents and students know a lot about transition, continuing communication and information sharing is key to each student's success. Success is dependent upon the involvement, leadership, and ideas of students and their families. Watching a system move from being professionally- to parent- and student-directed is the highest form of reward.

Coordination of Services and Information

Coordinating a new system is a difficult task that requires time, effort, and dedication. No one person can be responsible for implementing change of this magnitude, although most agree that having paid staff to assist with systems change activities is critical. Those involved in systems change have a great deal of knowledge to offer students and families, especially in the area of available local resources. Money doesn't have to be a factor in providing these resources - having the courage to ask your community for support is sometimes all you need. The support of administration in creating and sustaining systems change is a necessity.

Establishment of Effective Partnerships

Being able to set your differences and issues aside in order to pursue a common goal is what it's all about. The process of identifying and including all key stakeholders is an ongoing process - but one which is continually renewing. Having a focus, a bigger goal than just an activity, provides meaning, purpose, and a sense of cohesiveness among the many partners who come to the table to change a system. One of the most essential ingredients to ensuring effective, committed partnerships is the involvement of the people who stand to benefit from the change - the students themselves hold the key to your partnership's overall success.

Movement Toward Systems Change

Initiating and sustaining systems change takes time, thoughtful planning, and a willingness to start small and build toward success. It requires flexibility, creativity, and the patience to wait for your environment to develop to the point where the acceptance of change can occur.

Marketing and Public Relations

Changing a system requires the support of your community at large. If they don't know who you are, what you do, what you're working toward, and how it will benefit the community, then the community will not support you. Marketing your purpose, goals, and successes early on and throughout the process of systems change will help you to build sincere relationships and reduce stereotypes and prejudice. Collaboration with the community is essential for your success.

Student Self Determination

Students must be given the chance to be equal partners in the process of systems change. Including students in developing and implementing all activities ensures their relevance and importance to actual student needs, while building students' self-esteem, confidence, and leadership skills.

Implementation of Transition Planning Processes

Looking at transition needs of students doesn't really have any meaning until it's put in the context of a "real-life" rather than "school" setting. Changing the way people think, plan, and carry out transition planning is difficult and can appear overwhelming. Teachers and professionals must be able to see the immediate benefits of making significant changes in their transition planning process for a new way to be accepted and supported.

Facilitation of Training

Training must be carefully planned to ensure relevance for your participants. It's critical to ask people what they need, how they want it presented, and what will make it worth their while to participate in trainings you provide. It's very clear that regardless of how much people know about transition planning, there's always more to learn. Ongoing training is a high need.

Anoka County CTIC

1994-1995

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

*Focused on student leadership and
involvement in their own transition planning.*

*Students were included as key players on the
grant planning team.*

A student was the director of the project.

Overview

The Anoka County CTIC project's goal was to develop and implement new processes that would assist students, parents, and professionals to more effectively use the transition planning process to truly meet the needs of each individual student. High priority was placed on developing processes to involve students in developing their personal abilities, to create a better method of accessing services, and to develop their personal support systems in order to reach their highest potential.

The Need

The Anoka County CTIC had long recognized a lack of student participation and involvement in transition planning and on the CTIC. A planning group including all key players, especially students and parents, was established and a grant was written to become a demonstration site in order to address this need.

Meeting the Need

The planning group decided to train teams of students, parents, and professionals to access and participate in the transition planning process. These teams would then go on to train and assist other students, parents, and professionals in order to share the knowledge of a successful transition process at their local school and county levels.

The personal futures planning (PFP) process - a student-centered process that looks at strategies, goals, and support for a student's future - was chosen to use for training and a student was hired to direct the project.

Three training workshops were provided to individual education plan (IEP) teams from seven representative districts. Highlights included:

- Students were offered the option of having a mentor assigned to them during the training process; mentors were recruited and trained by the CTIC.
- Dinner was provided at the workshops, which provided a forum for extensive networking; this also provided time for mentors and training facilitators to become acquainted.
- Students shared their stories of successful transition planning using personal futures planning.
- Teams created a personal profile with each student directing their own future planning process.
- Packets of information were disseminated to each participant to support what they were being taught.
- Break-out sessions were provided for students on self-advocacy, for parents on rights and responsibilities, and for professionals on facilitating the implementation of the future plan into the IEP process.
- Teams were assisted in creating action plans for their local school districts.
- Teams were assisted in attending a transition fair with thirty-five agency representatives.

The Results

- A safe environment where students could speak up for themselves and have their ideas valued was created using the PFP process.

- The students' desires were the focus of planning meetings as a result of using this process.
- Student involvement increased at local CTIC meetings and at IEP meetings.
- Students volunteered to present their personal experiences of the PFP process to the CTIC.
- Individual school districts renewed their commitment to the transition planning process as a result of our efforts.
- Mentorship opportunities created a stronger relationship between high school students and community college students.
- One student had the responsibility of directing the grant and did so very successfully!
- One of the training facilitators who was a National Guard member approached his company commander to use the PFP process as a retention tool for the National Guard.
- Nekton, a residential provider in Anoka County, became involved in the transition planning process for the first time and decided to use the PFP process to train staff in their in-home family division.
- State Services for the Blind, one of the training facilitators, identified the need to implement the training of the PFP process at their Deaf-Blind summer Institute.

Reflections

One of the stipulations for students to participate in the grant project was that they, along with their teams, would be willing to plan and implement a transition activity the following year with the support of the CTIC. The underlying reason for this was that these core teams would be able to serve as role models of successful transition teams to others going through the transition planning process. Trained teams were also expected to serve as mentors to other students, parents, and professionals.

Four transition activities were proposed and are going to be regularly implemented by different teams:

- **Self-Advocacy:** Providing mentoring to a student at an IEP meeting, addressing self-esteem issues with a student, developing a self-advocacy group, and training other students in the IEP process.
- **Transition Fair:** Hosting a county-wide transition fair at each team's school; the fair addresses a variety of topics including guardianship, IEP changes, self-advocacy, and social security income.
- **K-12 Commitment:** Developing strategies to ensure the commitment of K-12 teachers in the IEP and transition planning process.
- **Personal Futures Planning and the IEP:** Developing strategies for incorporating parts of the PFP system into the IEP planning process; this team also is developing a video on the PFP process for staff use.

Benton-Stearns CTIC

1993-1995

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Young people and their families are seen as having the greatest stake in the outcome of the transition planning.

Transition planning is an ongoing opportunity for young people to learn.

People with disabilities and their families have freedom of choice with planning and services.

Overview

The Benton-Stearns CTIC received grants for two consecutive years to implement a transition demonstration site project. Our grant focused on:

- Involving young people, family members, school staff, and agency personnel in a mentorship training program embodying a person-centered family approach for personal futures planning.
- Verifying the use and effectiveness of formal transition supports, such as social services and mental health services by past graduates with mild disabilities.
- Clarifying the need for use of *informal* supports for students with mild disabilities who don't meet the eligibility criteria for formal agency supports or choose not to involve agencies in their lives. Mild disabilities in this project included emotional/behavioral disabilities, learning disabilities, and mild mental impairments.

The Need

Since 1987, annual transition planning has been a required component of individual education planning for Minnesota students aged fourteen to twenty-two. School districts have generally responded to this mandate by moving students and their families through a system-driven process of assessment and identification of needs. These plans reflect deficits rather than dreams and force choices among a narrow range of predetermined services and supports. Benton-

Stearns CTIC thought it critical to reshape the current transition planning process in their districts to focus on the gifts, capacities, freedom of choice, and preferences of the students and families.

A focus on follow-up of past graduates, specifically with mild disabilities, was a logical next step to further enhance and refine the transition planning process. This was of special concern because formal organized transition hand-off processes had been implemented throughout the District 742 schools to ensure awareness of community services as well as to include agency personnel in the IEP planning process.

Meeting the Need

The Benton-Stearns CTIC addressed the needs that had been identified over the course of two years through the following activities:

- Needs Assessment: Development of a Home/School/Community survey to determine perceptions about the transition process by students, parents, and service providers. The results of the survey were used to individualize awareness in training sessions for all participants.
- Identifying and training mentors: Through a previous federally-funded project, fifty transition mentors were identified, including special education staff, students from nine area high schools, family members, and community agency personnel. Mentors received three half-day trainings on personal futures planning tailored to their needs and interests. They served as an advisory group for the project as well as an informal technical assistance team with their high schools and the Benton-Stearns CTIC.

- Implementing new practices: The Benton-Stearns CTIC worked closely with school districts, agency personnel, and mentors to ensure carry over from the training to actual practice within the Individual Education Plan process. Interagency agreements, cost sharing endeavors, cooperative working relationships - along with processes for working through difficult issues and breaking down barriers - were shared through the technical assistance teams within each school Building transition facilitators within the District 742 schools and the Benton-Stearns special education coordinator were also involved.
- Follow-up study: A partnership was developed between the mentorship teams and community education programs in each of the participating school districts to help access or identify past graduates with mild disabilities and their current needs. Past graduates were also invited to the semi-annual Transition Consumer Conferences and interviewed regarding their use of community and regional supports. A survey was also conducted with current school-age youth to help determine their needs and interests outside of school.

The Results

- It was found that many public and private agencies don't keep files longer than one year for students not eligible for services or those that were inactive. This excluded a large group of young adults with mild disabilities and included such options as County Social Services and Job Service.
- It was learned that Community Education was very willing to collaborate with the Benton-Stearns CTIC to address the issue of better transition planning. The community education structure served to encourage mentors to join the advisory board. Some also became members of the CTIC.
- Eleven young adult past graduates attended the Transition conference. All had had some contact with community agencies, and six of the young adults were interviewed. However, the students' disabilities would be described as *developmental disabilities* or *low-incidence* instead of the targeted grant group.
- A survey of school-age students receiving learning disability services in five high schools in three communities through Community Education was conducted. Numerous areas of interest for after-school classes and activities were checked, but when contacted about attending such classes, there wasn't a commitment from the majority of the group to attend. The offerings were then presented more broadly to the low-incidence disability group.

Reflections

- The original charge of the grant was to reach young adults with mild disabilities who weren't making a successful transition from school to adult life. The lack of these young people at the conference in spite of a special invitation, as well as the outcomes of this grant, reinforce how difficult it is to obtain solid data on students with mild disabilities and their use of community support services for transition purposes. However, this information is critical in designing effective transition preparation for current students.
- Attempting to obtain information about agency involvement and service satisfaction provided insight into the privacy issues involved in sharing information between agencies. Agencies use a variety of systems to track data on students, but there is no common system. This should be rectified.
- No system policies or practices for sharing information between agencies was found, other than individual releases by the client. In a time of concern about more intrusions into personal lives than is necessary, many young adults were hesitant to sign releases of information. Perhaps the best strategy for obtaining information would be to obtain authorization before graduation.

Cannon Valley CTIC

1994-1995

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Practical hands-on experience with independent living skills.

Ownership of "their" space and, with that, learning responsibility.

Learning outside the school building.

Overview

The Cannon Valley CTIC created an Independent Living Lab for students with mild to severe cognitive disabilities. The purpose of the lab was help bridge the gap from school to "real life" by supporting students to plan and practice independent living activities in a real apartment setting. Students worked on independent living skills to meet their goals through individualized transition plans that included the independent living lab experience. These included such things as menu planning and nutrition, purchasing groceries, meal preparation, basic housekeeping, sanitation, laundry care, personal care and hygiene, time management, recreation and leisure planning, understanding and using adult behavior and social skills, and learning to use transportation options in the community.

The Need

Northfield Schools have provided transition services to young adults with disabilities for many years. The curriculum has included teaching independent living skills within the classroom environment and students have developed some skills in meal preparation, clean-up, laundry, and basic housekeeping. However, feedback from parents, students, and teachers has indicated a need for opportunities to develop independent living skills in a "real-life" environment. The transfer of skills from the school setting and the special educa-

tion classroom to the home or future independent living environment doesn't occur consistently. Generalizing information is often difficult and the same sense of purpose isn't present in the classroom as it is in a real apartment setting. The Cannon Valley CTIC felt that an independent living experience in the community on a regular basis was the missing link for the successful transfer of skills from school to adult life.

Meeting the Need

Students were given the opportunity to learn and practice a variety of independent living skills in a real life, hands-on setting. Training included skill-building in the areas of:

- Menu planning and nutrition
- Kitchen clean-up/sanitation
- Housekeeping
- Laundry care
- Personal care and hygiene
- Purchasing clothing
- Time management
- Budgeting and money management
- Adult behavior and social skills
- Recreation and leisure activities

Students were transported between school and the independent living lab using Northfield Transit, a public transit system. Support for travel as well as learning and practicing the independent living skills was provided by the Northfield special needs vocational/transition coordinator and special education staff.

The Results

Students learned many functional skills through the hands-on training provided, including:

- Planning meals for each day which helped them to learn likes, dislikes, the basics of good nutrition, and well-balanced meals; students planned the menu, shopped for groceries, prepared the meal, and prepared snacks.
- Budgeting for groceries needed to prepare planned meals.
- Maintaining a clean cooking environment and cleaning up after cooking a meal; discussion regarding health issues and why sanitation is important also occurred.
- Housekeeping, including vacuuming, dusting, making beds, mopping floors, cleaning bathrooms, as well as general "straightening up" activities.
- Maintaining good hygiene - tailored to the individual needs of each student.
- Developing a wardrobe budget as well as making purchases for that wardrobe.
- Managing time related to training at the Independent Living Lab as well as school and work.
- Developing and balancing a household budget and managing money using income from their jobs.
- Coping with many of the responsibilities and privileges that come with renting an apartment.
- Planning and implementing activities to enhance their participation and social life in the community.

Reflections

- The students took real ownership of the apartment and enjoyed the learning experience.
- Students were motivated to learn in an environment outside the traditional school setting.

Chisago & Pine County CTICs

1995-1996

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 18-22

Unique Features

This was a two-county collaborative effort.

Follow-up study addressed the transition issues of students with disabilities.

Address the question of whether transition planning is working.

Overview

In 1995 and 1996, the Pine County and Chisago County CTIC members distributed an in-house committee consumer satisfaction survey to determine what needed to be addressed, what was going well, and what could be done better in the area of transition services for students with disabilities. Results determined that a procedure to collect post-school follow-up information on students with disabilities was needed.

The Chisago and Pine County CTICs wanted to determine if inter-county agency agreements and transition services were working for students with disabilities regarding:

- Whether the current transition process was being followed and used correctly;
- What was happening in students' lives in the five transition areas; and
- How students viewed the transition services they received.

The Need

There was no follow-up system in place by area schools or state and county agencies to determine the quality of life and transition service delivery for students with disabilities. The information that had been

gathered was collected in a very informal manner over time and hadn't been systematically recorded. Committee members believed that follow-up information on students with disabilities leaving high school would help in developing a five-year projection of need in the area of transition services in the two counties represented by the CTICs.

Meeting the Need

- Research Clerk: A research clerk was hired to fulfill the requirements of the grant. Her role was to make recommendations about future follow-up study procedures and possible changes to improve the existing system of transition service delivery in the two counties.
- CTIC Role: A steering committee was appointed to oversee and provide guidance to the Research Clerk. This committee defined the sample population as students who received Individualized Education Plan (IEP) services and that had exited from Pine and Chisago county schools in 1995. This included dropouts, 1995 graduates, and Post-secondary Options students.
- Instrument Development: A student survey instrument was developed and a list of students obtained. CTIC agreements from both counties were the driving force behind the questions on the survey, both of which had time lines for services and activities necessary in the transition process. The survey was field tested by administering it to ten students enrolled in the Occupational Skills Program at Pine Technical College. Students gave feedback regarding the wording of questions, paper color, incentive to complete the survey, and overall readability of the survey.

The Results

A few examples of what we learned about the post-graduation status of students with disabilities include:

- « More than half the students (55%) were still living at home and not using independent living skills taught in school.
- Only 14% of the respondents were contacting Community Education for activities in their communities.
- Of the respondents, 62% didn't know where to go to get information on recreation/leisure activities in their local communities.
- Thirteen respondents (34%) reported attending a post-secondary school. Of these, ten (77%) reported being employed while attending school.
- Twenty respondents (53%) were working but not enrolled in a school program.

To increase the survey return rate, former students were offered a chance to win \$20.00 upon completing and returning their survey by a given time. Twenty (36%) out of fifty-six total respondents returned surveys by the deadline. The research clerk felt this was a key factor in the high return rate from the mailing. A former student from Pine City won the cash prize.

The primary result of this project was a recommendation to create a Post High School Follow-up System for students on IEPs that leave the schools in Pine and Chisago counties. The system would have two tracks:

- A one-year follow-up study that would include linking to the existing Minnesota Post-school Follow-up System which is required for those schools receiving Tech Prep funding.
- A three-year follow-up study system which would be a collaborative effort between the CTIC, schools, agencies, and the St. Croix River Education District (SCRED).

Reflections

- We learned how well CTIC members work together. Many agencies with different policies and procedures were able to cooperate and work toward the common goal of assisting youth in transition from high school to either work or further education.
- There was some initial confusion about how to get the names of students for the project. The research clerk was able to access information without violating data privacy laws because she was considered a SCRED employee.
- We learned that we need to develop a system to double-check the information the schools send to SCRED and the information schools have on students, since information is occasionally incomplete or missing.
- The most critical piece of information resulting from this project was that a comprehensive, cohesive system of post-school follow-up must be implemented for all students, including those with disabilities. This system must be used - without exception - by all schools, agencies, and others involved in transition planning at the state and local levels. We believe sharing our findings with those implementing the current Minnesota Post-School Follow-up Study is the key.

Duluth CTIC 1995 -1996

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 18-28

Unique Features

Developing a network for community recreation.

Teaching students how to plan their own recreation and leisure opportunities.

Overview

The primary goal of this project was to expand recreational opportunities for young adults with disabilities in transition. By exposing youth to a variety of activities and transportation options, we hoped to increase their ability to independently access future recreational opportunities individually and with small groups of friends.

The Need

In May and June of 1995, the Duluth CTIC polled groups of parents, consumers, and area service providers on their priority areas for transition planning. Ninety-two percent of returned surveys indicated a need for increased recreational opportunities in Duluth for young adults with disabilities. While there were agencies doing large-group activities, there was only a limited system in existence to serve the individual recreational needs of young adults with disabilities. The idea of a pilot program to test the success of a "Social Club" was developed.

Meeting the Need

- The first step was to decide on a specific population to serve. Our target group of young adults ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-eight, with a wide variety of disabilities as well as varying levels of ability.
- Agencies on the CTIC sent out a questionnaire to young adults with disabilities in the target group. Returning a completed questionnaire was the only entry requirement for the Social Club.
- A core group of participants was established as a result of the questionnaire, and regular Social Club meetings were started every other week. These changed to every week due to the need for consistency and a routine to help people get involved and stay involved. The club served several purposes, including:
 - developing and discussing recreational plans;
 - providing information about activities available in the community;
 - providing tickets for events that might have otherwise been out of reach financially or simply not accessed by these young adults due to lack of information;
 - providing help and information with transportation options;
 - providing an opportunity for young adults to meet and develop relationships; *and*
 - encouraging independence and personal choice in choosing recreational options.
- Student interns were hired to help with Social Club meetings and to attend some of the activities with the young adults in the club. The purpose to provide support and encourage the development of good relational skills among participants.
- A monthly calendar of events was provided to highlight available community activities
- CTIC members assisted with this project by fulfilling a number of roles:
 - hosting the funds to pay for the project;
 - providing space for the Social Club at the Duluth Public Library;
 - distributing questionnaires; *and*
 - working on sub-committees to meet grant goals.

The Results

The results were two-fold. First was the impact of this program on the Duluth CTIC. There's no question that implementing and supporting this endeavor has been a very positive experience. CTIC members worked together toward a common goal, which helped to build a sense of purpose, action, and commitment among members. Second were the findings regarding the young adults participating in the program. General findings included:

- Everyone who became involved in the program had a developmental disability, even though attempts were made to include people with a wide range of disabilities. A few people also had physical disabilities, as well.
- Most of the young adults were able to use the public transportation system, making a high transportation budget unnecessary.
- Club meetings to set up activities were very important because young adults didn't initiate activities on their own. Very few people came to the office or called for assistance. If they did, it was usually to pick up tickets or to follow up on something arranged at a club meeting.
- Many phone contacts were needed from the program coordinator and interns to organize activities.
- The number of club meetings attended was directly related to how many activities each person took part in. Young adults who didn't come to club meetings didn't participate in as many recreational activities.
- The benefit received from the program was directly tied to an individual's attitude and the choices he or she made to participate and be actively involved.

An entirely new system was developed to help young adults with disabilities access community recreational opportunities. This program will continue into the future through some form of community education. Tickets and other items purchased by the grant funding have been "stockpiled" and will continue to be given out at future Social Club meetings.

It's our hope that the young adults themselves - using the skills they have developed and maintaining the relationships they have built - will continue their activities on their own.

Reflections

- There's a fine line between offering needed help and encouragement and fostering dependence. It's often easier for a young adult with a disability to seek a relationship with someone working for them instead of a peer. The key is to encourage relationships among group members with common interests.
- Building friendships takes routine, predictable opportunities for interaction over a long period of time. Six months isn't enough time to build a program like this - plan on a year to two to establish a good solid program.
- It's important to have a fiscal host in place to manage your grant funding before program activities begin. Our CTIC had a great deal of difficulty with this area and proceeded to have problems related to purchasing tickets, paying staff, and getting paperwork processed in order to access the money.
- It's best to have access to cash rather than using purchase orders when buying tickets or other items for recreational activities. Many places won't accept purchase orders, even from a local school district to purchase items - cash or a check is a must!

Freeborn County CTIC Clark Street Jobs Program

Contact

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507/373-4230
507/377-6536

Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Vocational component in a day treatment program within the high school.

Local business and agency involvement as well as coordination with a teacher and a family therapist.

Students and families helped to develop a curriculum that was motivating and customized to meet student needs.

1994-1995

Overview

The Freeborn County CTIC's Clark Street Options Program is a day treatment program for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities at the Albert Lea High School. The goal of this project was to add a vocational component to this program, which would include intensive, individual transition counseling and career planning. During 1994-95, services were provided to a total of sixteen students throughout the year, and to approximately twelve students at any given time.

The Need

It was recognized that a gap existed in the transition services provided for youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities in the Albert Lea school district. Although students' academic and therapeutic needs were being met, no vocational component existed within the current treatment program.

Meeting the Need

Meeting students' vocational and career needs was accomplished in several ways:

- Intensive individual sessions included a review of student goals, interest testing, exploration of careers and post-secondary options related to careers, job placement plans and agreements, and other specialized activities for each student;
- Classroom activities included discussion, viewing videos, eliciting information from students to affirm the knowledge they already possessed, role playing with interviews and potentially stressful work situations, video taping mock interviews, critiquing skills, participating in brief writing and itemizing exercises, and preparing job applications, resumes, and cover letters;

- * Job site activities included identifying employers related to students' career interests, visiting work sites, touring work sites, and gathering information on job duties, training requirements, wages, benefits, and job availability; and
- * Presentations to students included information about the job market, identification of student's skills and assets, effective presentation through paperwork and interviews, decision-making and goal setting, vocational exploration, and job-keeping skills.

The Results

The need for a vocational component to the Clark Street Options Program was strongly affirmed. Significant findings included:

- * Individual career counseling coupled with transition planning was essential for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities. Our students didn't appear to possess as much self-confidence and

comfort with new situations and accessing services outside the classroom as other students. Many refused to accompany the vocational counselor to the high school career center where they might encounter unfamiliar students and settings.

- Students demonstrated a need to be "walked through" job information sources and catalogues.
- It was important to reward small advances by each student and to keep expectations reasonable - that is, completing one or two goals. Outside stressors distracted students from focusing on the task at hand.
- Materials and activities were most effective for the majority of students when relevant to students' lives and when involving direct, hands-on experience.
- Students needed support and advocacy from professionals in order to access jobs and to enter youth programs. Some students had "burned bridges" in the past and direct intervention by the vocational counselor was very helpful to correct this situation.
- Students had a basic need to learn to advocate for themselves beyond the basics of self-promotion learned through traditional job skills training.
- Not all students were ready for actual work experiences or summer work programs after this training. In our case, it was due to the young age of most students, combined with individual issues and situations.
- High-quality vocational materials and resources were expensive, but integral to the success of this type of day treatment program.
- Factors such as lack of reliable transportation and a supportive family environment continued to sabotage these students' efforts, despite gaining job-seeking and job-keeping skills.

Reflections

- The vocational component has become an integral part of the Clark Street Job Options program. This has required ongoing support from our system of transition service providers, as family therapists are generally not trained to be career counselors.
- Students were encouraged to participate in developing the vocational curriculum and efforts were made to involve families more intensively.
- Meetings related to our demonstration grant became a forum for new ideas to those interested in successful transitions for students. A vision was affirmed to increase partnerships between the school, local businesses, employers, and the community in general.

Freeborn County CTIC Cooperative Community Work Exploration Project

Contact

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507/377-6536

Age Groups Served

Juniors and seniors in high school

Unique Features

Opportunity to explore four work sites during the year.

Access to the program through either special needs or regular education vocational co-op programs.

Community service students act as peer helpers.

1995-1996

Overview

The major focus of this project was to improve opportunities for students with disabilities by developing ongoing, community-based career and work training stations for them within existing vocational education programs. Students explored various careers and developed job skills by working at a different job site each quarter.

Partners in the project included the Freeborn County Area Chamber of Commerce, representatives of area businesses and industry, parents, students, the Freeborn County CTIC, the local Workforce Development Center, and educators from Albert Lea High School.

The Need

Traditionally, students with disabilities have been under-represented in vocational education programs. A program needs assessment showed that of the 1,089 students enrolled in vocational courses state-wide, only two percent were students with disabilities. By comparison, 5.8 percent of students in grades ten through twelve at the Albert Lea High School and area learning center had disabilities.

For several years, Albert Lea Area Schools have been moving toward implementing a school-to-work transition model. Components of the model included applied academics; community-based learning including internships, co-op programs, and youth apprenticeships; and articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions. A local site team that includes all of the partners previously mentioned had been developed. The site team recognized the need to develop more opportunities to include students with disabilities in these school-to-work options.

Meeting the Need

- The program allowed students to gain hands-on skills in a various career areas rather than working at the same job all year long as is the case in a traditional vocational co-op program. Students rotated through various work sites to explore career choices, gain work skills, and integrate vocational and academic knowledge.

Students had the support of peer helpers from the high school's community service class as well as a job coach, if needed.

- The program provided the opportunity for students to participate in student leadership programs for *all* students. Student organizations met during regular class time, with emphasis on parliamentary procedures, volunteer projects, and state competitions.

The Results

This project provided opportunities for students with disabilities to successfully participate in Albert Lea's school-to-work transition initiatives. Our project developed and implemented the following activities:

- Establishing eight community-based work stations for students with disabilities to try different occupational pathways. The career/job exploration training sites were incorporated into the existing work co-op programs. Student with disabilities could enroll in one of the following programs to access the sites:
 - Business Co-op Program
 - Trade and Industry Co-op Program
 - Farm /Agri-business Management Program
 - Work Experience - Disadvantaged
 - Work Experience - Handicapped
- Writing training plans and career training objectives for each site;
- Formulating a student application process for entrance into the program;
- Developing authentic assessments to determine student abilities for each training segment; *and*
- Developing a peer mentoring program: students had the support of student mentors who were enrolled in the social studies department's "Community Service: The Active Citizen" course. The course was scheduled to coincide with the work program schedule.

Eight students registered for this program for the 1996-97 school year. Six are juniors who have registered through the Special Needs Work Experience Program. One is a senior registered through the Trade and Industry Co-op Program and another a senior registered through the Business Co-op Program. The project is open to senior high special education students who have completed at least one term of "Work Seminar."

Reflections

- There is a lot of enthusiasm among business and industry in the Albert Lea area to provide training opportunities for students with disabilities.
- Not all work-based learning experience was paid. At the start of the project, we envisioned paid student training experiences. We also found out that non-paid internships are a component of many post-secondary programs and requiring pay would exclude some excellent training sites. We were careful to follow the regulations of the Fair Labor Standards Act when deciding whether a student was a trainee (unpaid) or an employee (paid) of a business.
- An overwhelming majority of the students surveyed reported high interest in the program as either a trainee or an employee.

Goodhue County CTIC

1993-1994

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Students explored and wrote goals in each of the five transition areas as part of a futures planning class.

Four school districts, as well as most of the service agencies for individuals with disabilities in Goodhue County, collaborated to implement this project.

Overview

Red Wing Central High School and the Goodhue County CTIC collaborated to further the development of a Futures Planning Course to assist students with disabilities to direct their own transition services. The project:

- Developed course materials in the five transition areas that include functional, hands-on skill development;
- Assisted students to gain skills in the five transition areas through classroom and community experience;
- Taught the overall basics of self-advocacy and self-determination to assist students with understanding and participating in developing their individual education plans; *and*
- Provided additional workshops and trainings to assist parents, employers, and service providers to support young adults with disabilities in pursuing their goals and dreams.

The Need

At the time of grant application, transition planning was done during IEP staffings. Students, their families, educators, and service providers felt this wasn't enough to meet students' needs for successful outcomes. A planning team was developed that included all the key stakeholders, especially the students and parents. Planning re-

volved around discovering critical elements needed for a successful transition from school to adult life for young adults with disabilities. The concept of a futures planning course was developed as a possible solution. This was envisioned as a way of providing a more in-depth system of transition planning in addition to assisting young adults to be the leaders in their own planning meetings.

Meeting the Need

During the Futures Planning Course, students were assisted in discovering their individual strengths and needs in their home, school, and community environments. They developed strategies to meet their needs and received support to share their ideas with their transition planning team. Students were also encouraged to become members of the CTIC and to use this as a tool for learning to become better self-advocates. Parents, employers, educators, and service providers helped students to become involved by helping them to prepare for participation in their IEP transition planning meetings, to attend workshops, and to attend transition fairs. These activities were all critical to planning and implementing grant activities.

Activities included:

- Futures planning workshops were held each spring in 1994, 1995, and 1996.
- Two to four students were, and still are, active members of our CTIC.
- A Futures Planning Course for students has been offered each semester throughout 1994, 1995, and 1996. This information is now also covered through our Work Experience Program.
- Every year, a transition fair for students with disabilities, their families, and service providers is held. This

has been a huge success. The fair was held during the day and students were provided with transportation, resource information, break-out sessions on different transition topics, and follow-up in school through classes.

The Results

- The Futures Planning workshops were attended by fifteen to twenty-five students each time and their parents. Comments received from parents and students were extremely positive.
- Eight to fifteen students participated in the Futures Planning Course each semester; students shared that they learned a lot from the course. Most students were also in the same instructor's Work Experience Program. Due to the instructor's case load, the two courses were integrated into one course.
- The Transition Fair has had approximately three hundred participants each year. The fair has been and will be repeated every year due to the overwhelming majority of positive comments.

Reflections

- The Futures Planning workshop and course need to be promoted by individual instructors, especially for students with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders.
- We offered credits or points for attending workshops; this increased students' attendance and participation and was very helpful.
- Many of our special education instructors needed lots of encouragement to get out of the "academic mode" and into the "transition mode" of functional, practical, real-life planning.
- Transition Fair planning must be started very early in the year. One of our most successful strategies was involving students in planning and incorporating their ideas of what would be interesting and helpful into the event. An example was the suggestion that our break-out sessions be only thirty minutes in length, since an hour was too long.
- The Transition Fair worked much better when it was held during the day rather than in the evening. We chose our local technical college as the ideal setting to hold this event.
- Student participation on our CTIC was essential and provided a very positive, exciting spin on our activities. We provided a CTIC member as a mentor to each student. The mentor discussed with the student the goals of the meeting, the activities, how the meetings were run, how to participate at meetings, and why it was important to be involved with improving our transition service delivery. This tradition will continue in our CTIC.

Grant County Child and Youth Council

1994-1995

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Birth-22

Unique Features

Focused on health and mental health.

Broad range of investment from early childhood, children's mental health, and transition age parents and service providers.

Community involvement in the planning and implementation phase.

Overview

The Grant County Child and Youth Council sponsored community planning meetings to examine the following areas of transition planning and improvement for children and youth with disabilities:

- Basic needs
- Physical health/mental health
- Vocational services
- Nurturance
- Recreation and leisure options

The intended outcome of these planning meetings was to increase our understanding of services available across each of the areas as well as the resources that each service provider could contribute to increase transition options. Activities that resulted from the community planning meetings were designed to compliment those meetings by providing an in-depth look at transition needs in our local area. This in turn helped to improve service delivery in areas labelled as priorities by key stakeholders, as well as helping to ensure quality administrative planning and decision making.

The Need

The selection of this activity was based on several sources of information. Council discussions revealed the fact that members were uncomfortable with the current understanding of school service needs. Representatives from non-mandated community groups expressed uncertainty about their roles in working with the Grant County council. The chairperson of a neighboring CTIC also advised

that determining post-school service needs was essential in effectively fulfilling the mission of CTICs and our interagency council. Review of transition publications confirmed the wisdom of this advice.

Meeting the Need

The outcome of identifying service needs and resources available to assist with meeting transition needs was addressed through three activities:

- Developing a process for identifying what services were needed by young adults with disabilities who would be graduating:
 - surveying teachers, agency staff, parents, and students on anticipated post-school needs;
 - following-up with local, former students; *and*
 - presenting compiled results at a community forum for feedback and recommendations.
- Identifying an ongoing process for sharing information about post-school service needs:
 - re-distributing surveys bi-annually and including questions about the effectiveness of the surveys;
 - holding transition forums in conjunction with every survey to get feedback and recommendations on how to proceed;

- distributing results to local agencies for planning;
- publishing results in the council newsletter;
- holding ongoing discussions through the council's Service Recommendation Team regarding post-school needs; *and*
- creating an interagency agreement formalizing our information-sharing process.
- Demonstrating how information collected can be used to improve high school and post-school services:
 - using information as a basis for strategic planning within agencies; *and*
 - using information as a basis for interagency and council problem solving.

The Results

Assessment results indicated the need for a multilevel approach to future needs assessments, planning, implementation, and evaluation:

- **Case by Case:** Wrap-around service planning was offered in each of the school districts served by the Child and Youth Council through the Service Recommendation Team. This service differed from the IEP process in that eligibility wasn't restricted to students who met special education guidelines. The Service Recommendation Team recorded service gaps as well as duplication of services for transition and reported this to the Child and Youth Council Executive Team on an ongoing basis. Findings and recommendations regarding services for children and young adults with disabilities were also reported to the School-to-Work Satellite Teams.
- **Overall System:** School-to-Work Satellite Teams were organized in each school district served by the Child and Youth Council. Satellite Team membership included students, parents, educators, business people, and representatives from local agencies. Each Satellite Team met monthly and was charged with assessing the school-to-work transition system as it existed in that school district's community. The team formulated strategies for improvement and was responsible for implementing these strategies. Improving the delivery of transition services, specifically as it related to students with disabilities, was a vital component of the Satellite Team process. Each School-to-Work Satellite Team reported their recommendations to the School-to-Work Governance Team. It was the responsibility of the Governance Team to coordinate planning across school district boundaries. The School-to-Work Governance team reported their recommendations to the Child and Youth Council Executive Team.
- **Governance:** The Council Executive Team analyzed and responded to recommendations made by the School-to-Work Satellites and the Service Recommendation Team. The Executive Team was the governance structure for the Council and was charged with changing policies, practices, and funding to better serve the needs of individuals, families, and the community.

Reflections

- This newly-created structure for identifying and responding to the transition needs of children and young adults with disabilities was in fledgling form at the end of the grant period. Expect to commit more than one year when undertaking a project like this.
- Multi-sector involvement early in the process created a high level of buy-in among most of the partners.

Little Crow CTIC

1994-1996

Contact

Dr. William Naylor

C.O.B.

6115 W Fifth Street

Willmar, MN56201

320/231-5184

or

Tammy Lacey

Willmar Senior High School

320/231-1100

Age Groups Served

*Hispanic students in grades seven and eight
and their families*

Unique Features

*Focused specifically on Hispanic students with
disabilities at the junior high level,*

*Hispanic role models/mentors were used to
provide students encouragement, examples,
and hope for their plans and dreams.*

*A Hispanic grant facilitator/coordinator was
hired to ensure the best possible communication
with students and parents in the Hispanic
community of Willmar.*

Overview

The goal of the Little Crow CTIC was to address the transition needs of diverse cultures, specifically Hispanic students with disabilities in the Willmar school system. Our school systems have made an attempt to address the needs of these students over the years. However, changes occurring within the Hispanic community with regard to education are so rapid that Hispanic students with disabilities are falling further behind rather than catching up.

The Need

The Hispanic community has grown rapidly in Willmar and surrounding areas in the past five years. Hispanic students comprise approximately 15% (725) of students in the entire K-12 student body of Willmar Public Schools, and the ratio continues to grow. Hispanic students with disabilities comprise approximately 7.3% of the Hispanic student population, compared to the average 10% found in most other cultures. The percentages are higher in preschool and grade school, falling off after eighth grade. Only seven students were reported in special education in the highest four grades. Interviews were conducted and the results indicated that Hispanic students were dropping out of school at alarming rates by age sixteen. Armed with these statistics, and seeing some possible correlations between the dropout rate, possible unidentified disabilities, and a lack of information on needed services, the Little Crow CTIC felt that addressing improved transition services for Hispanic students with disabilities was a critical issue to pursue.

Meeting the Need

The Little Crow CTIC developed and implemented this project over a two-year period between 1994 and 1996. Activities included:

An assessment tool was developed and verbally administered to parents and students regarding strengths and needs in the five transition areas.

The Hispanic Parents Advisory Council (HPAC) was established to interpret the findings from the assessment tool and focus groups. This group met on an ad hoc basis to discuss the activities of the grant and to give advice to the CTIC and assistant superintendent.

Information was disseminated to parents through the HPAC and through informal networking. The HPAC also formulated suggestions to reduce the dropout rate and helped with a media project which included making videos for public access cable television. Information was faxed to David Echavarria, who conducted a weekly radio announcement program in Spanish on the local radio station KWLM.

Focus groups were completed with males age sixteen and seventeen who had dropped out of traditional school settings to gain information about their reasons for dropping out and to get their perspectives about positive or negative experiences during their educational experience. Information was also col-

lected from female Hispanic students who had dropped out of school. The information was shared with the HPAC and suggestions were generated to share with the assistant superintendent.

- A bilingual coordinator was hired to meet with families at their homes and to help coordinate other aspects of the grant.
- An After School Club was started for seventh and eighth graders. One of the goals of this club was to provide students with additional structured time to complete homework assignments with the help of Hispanic role models who provided tutoring. Business owners and leaders from the Hispanic community spoke to the class about their careers and the importance of education and goal planning. The group also went on community tours of post-secondary educational institutions and participated in recreational activities over the summer months to provide continuity of the grant activities.
- A Junior High United Cultures Club based on a successful high school model was established at Willmar Junior High to help facilitate the empowerment of younger Hispanic students.

The Results

- Twenty-five parents and students completed the needs assessment. Communication between Hispanic parents and schools improved, especially through HPAC. The HPAC plans to continue meeting.
- The After School Club had fairly consistent attendance, with ten students the first year and eleven students the second. Volunteer tutors included a junior high teacher, a elementary school major from Willmar Community College, a tenth-grade high school student, two paraprofessionals from the Willmar public school system, and a student member of the United Cultures Club.
- The Junior High United Cultures Club grew to sixteen members who participated in cultural activities and projects. One example included a mural for the high school cafeteria. The mural stressed the theme of equality and value for all cultures and ethnic groups.
- It was found that a video could be aired and produced on public access cable TV for no cost to the grant except purchasing videotapes. A tape detailing the work of the grant as well as one on the history of Mexico, both of which include contributions of local Hispanics, were produced.

Reflections

As transition coordinators, we were able to get a base-line of information from the Hispanic students and families in our community regarding their transition needs. We found:

- Sports are a popular recreational activity - more so for boys than girls.
- There is a high degree of family involvement in chores and home maintenance by Hispanic students.
- Parents felt that no needs showed up in the area of community participation because most community groups are made up of Caucasian persons.
- Post-secondary training was the greatest need according to the survey. Lack of awareness of educational opportunities, poor academic skills, and financial barriers were the most common issues.
- The Homework Club is expected to merge with another after-school club for all races at the junior high. Funding will be sought to provide transportation and Hispanic role models for tutors.

We learned that numerous needs must be addressed for Hispanic students to find success in educational settings and to transition to adult life. Hispanic role models, acceptance in the community, career awareness, goal setting, and empowering students are a few of the most important needs. We learned the importance of educating the community against prejudice and false racial stereotypes, of structured programs and added support for Hispanic students, and of enhancing cultural self-esteem. We also learned the importance of networking and community solidarity, the need to improve communication between cultures, and the need for more effective communication with Hispanic parents about transition planning and services.

Morrison County Interagency Coordinating Council

Contact

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Mid-state Education District
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320/632-5417*

Age Groups Served

Birth-22

Unique Features

Single interagency planning process.

Unitary case management coordination.

Family focused process that builds on strengths, interests, and informal & formal supports.

1993-1996

Overview

The goal of this Service Coordination Project was to develop a single interagency planning process addressing all children and young adults with disabilities, ages birth through twenty-two. It would be designed to facilitate short- and long-range planning that is comprehensive and student-and family-focused.

The Need

The need for a single system of planning for children and youth with disabilities and their families has long been recognized in Morrison County. As with many other areas in Minnesota, bringing together all the entities that serve children and their families is more easily said than done. To begin this process, Morrison County developed the Morrison County Interagency Coordinating Council (MCICC). This council included representatives from children's mental health, early childhood intervention and education, and transition services.

Feedback from parents and agency members concerning duplication in planning processes, inconsistency in the identification of an individual's outcomes across agencies, and sporadic service delivery led us to develop a plan to address these concerns. The overall goal was to work toward addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities through a comprehensive, coordinated planning process that eliminated gaps and overlaps in services, as well as eased the transition planning process for youth and their families.

Meeting the Need

The Service Coordination Project aimed to develop a system of unitary case management and a single planning process for individuals

from birth to age twenty-two. The process was family-focused, assets-based, and incorporated futures planning processes that were piloted with a number of families and refined according to family evaluations. This was facilitated by an interagency service coordinator for which a job description and position responsibilities were developed. Pursuit of state level endorsement of a single planning process is ongoing.

The Results

We have learned much through the development of this planning process. We are continuing to learn as we refine our process and implement the use of "The Plan" and the process with families and service providers. Some of our most significant results include:

- We learned that the development of the plan and the process wasn't that difficult and was an effective practice for students/families of all ages.
- The process allowed for more use of community resources and less reliance on formalized care systems.
- Using a single plan *document* wasn't as beneficial as developing the interagency planning *process*; developing a community-based, family-centered, strengths-based plan could happen with any existing document from any agency.

- Families noted satisfaction with having a single service coordinator who was available to them to address needs across settings. However, the roles and responsibilities of the service coordinator needed to be explicitly delineated.
- Staff and families were very open, supportive, and willing to try new planning strategies.
- It was beneficial to have an interagency position housed in a different agency than our fiscal host; the flexibility of this position without a single agency affiliation offered an opportunity to meet the needs of families and students in an ongoing way and averted numerous crises.
- Staff from the pilot projects became more family-focused in their roles with other families and students (e.g., altering meeting times, making home visits, striving to include fathers in the meetings, recognizing family priorities).
- Families and students became more empowered in dealing with community agencies and teams and in recognizing their critical importance to the team process.
- Families became more involved with informal community supports and resources rather than relying on formalized services from governmental agencies (involvement with 4H, community education, church-related activities, etc.).

Reflections

- Many different interpretations of "family-focused" exist both between and within agencies.
- The process of engaging all the potential players is ongoing and never-ending.
- Ongoing good communication between all members of the team is essential.
- At times it's necessary to consider the natural flow and progression in planning processes versus struggling with pre-set time lines.
- It's very beneficial to have flexibility to implement working beyond standard hours and boundaries (i.e., 8:00-4:00 Monday through Friday).
- Follow-up with staff and families on a regular basis has ensured smooth, ongoing communication and avoided misinterpretations and hard feelings.
- It has been important to implement and evaluate this pilot project as a stand-alone project and not as an additional add-on responsibility for existing staff. Our next challenge will be to identify how this system may be expanded and incorporated into current delivery systems.

Midwest Special Education Cooperative

Contact

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Midwest Special Education Cooperative
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Age Ranges Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Students lived in apartments to experience hands-on, functional independent living skills training.

1994-1995

Overview

This program brought together educators, parents, students, the Rehabilitation Services, county personnel, the Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA), and the Center for Independent Living. Students from throughout our district were eligible to attend a three-week independent living and training program. In addition to attending summer school classes at the local high school, students actually moved into apartments. They were offered a wide range of activities including recreation and leisure, independent living and community skills training, career exploration, and a field trip to a post-secondary occupational skills program in Brainerd.

The Need

The idea for the Transition Apartment Program (TAP) evolved from a series of conversations at CTIC meetings with parents and other members. Parents expressed frustration and concern that their children weren't being offered enough opportunities to become independent in the community. One parent reported that his sixteen-year-old daughter attended a "school" each summer in southern Minnesota where she learned a variety of real-life skills. He was considering enrolling her there year-round unless this issue was addressed and improved at the local level. After much discussion, the CTIC decided to push for more and better collaboration between the high school

and other providers to improve outcomes for students making the transition from school to adult life.

Meeting the Need

Project committee members included representatives from several different agencies that had an interest in and commitment to expanding and improving local transition services. This commitment included supporting TAP through monetary contributions as well as through in-kind services and staff time.

The program was decreased from eight to three weeks due to some difficulties with implementation. Students enjoyed a very active three weeks where they:

- Were exposed to a wide variety of community resources and experiences both in rural Minnesota and in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area;
- Learned how to use public transportation;
- Became involved in a weekly softball league with another agency;
- Learned how to use the public library;
- Learned the location of public agencies and met with staff to learn how to access services; *and*
- Explored career options through public school programs and by visiting several post-secondary sites.

TAP focused on developing a more independent life-style with each student. Living away from home, cooking, laundry, using public transportation, accessing community services, and shopping were all a part of learning what independence is all about.

The Results

The training that focused on independent living skills was very successful. Students practiced a variety of skills designed to increase their ability to live and work independently. The recreation / leisure and community participation skills portions were equally successful. Several of the students from the smaller, rural communities learned how to use public transportation and planned trips to the library or grocery store, or for other shopping on their own.

The program ran for just three weeks and, because of this, there wasn't adequate time to implement everything we'd originally planned. However, the overall results were very good and TAP was considered by all involved to be a great success. Parents, students, school administrators, as well as other agencies involved loved it! The information gained during this brief time provided the basis for addressing students' transition needs on their IEPs in a much more practical, functional way.

The impact of a program like this on transition planning is immense. Plans are being made to investigate a long-term, year-round program where students from other districts could attend school in Morris, live in an apartment, and have paid work experience. Support for this concept is strong and there is little doubt that it will eventually become a reality. Because of TAP, students in this rural area will now have a greater chance of accessing quality transition services.

Reflections

The most important thing we learned was not to panic and to remain flexible! Nothing went as planned, but we rose to the challenge and were able to be successful. The following are some helpful hints:

- Three furnished, barrier-free apartments were promised to us when the grant was written, but then became unavailable after the grant was received. In order to avoid this problem, get the promise in writing so you have a binding contract.
- Two key staff, committed to the project from the onset, became unavailable to commit their time. Again, write an interagency contract specifying the need, number of hours, pay (if any), and what each agency will provide toward the project.
- We realized, too late, that we didn't actually have enough money to run a program like this and that our cost projections were too low. An apartment training program is very expensive - estimate for a higher budget than you think you'll need. Talk to others who have done this before to get an idea of what it will take to run on a daily basis.
- The weakest portion of the program was in the area of career exploration and planning for post-secondary education options. With more time, this could have been addressed in much greater depth.

Minneapolis CTIC

1993-1996

Contact

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Age Ranges Served

Ages 14-22, families, and support staff

Unique Features

Development of a resource manual for each of the twenty-five special education program staff to share with families and students.

Overview

The essence of all CTICs' goals is to provide interagency linkages for a smooth transition from school to adult life for young adults with disabilities. What became obvious to our members and a logical outgrowth of our experience was the need for a formalized, common understanding of the resources and services available to students and families, as well as the need to develop a process linking agencies and families to enhance successful transitions. The goal of the Minneapolis CTIC over the past three years has been to develop effective interagency processes (including a working interagency agreement), as well as to pilot several training programs for students, families, and teachers to enhance their knowledge of transition services.

The Need

Prior to beginning the grant in 1993, the Minneapolis CTIC surveyed school staff and provided transition training to staff, parents, students, and CTIC members to determine the real transition needs in our community. The responses suggested that students may not be receiving and benefiting from appropriate services from agencies.

Additional needs identified were for continued staff training and student and family education. Because of the diversity and complexity of systems as large as the Minneapolis schools and county services, there was a greater need to have a simplified, unified network in place to formally address agency agreements for providing services. As a result, a further goal was to develop an interagency agreement to solidify and enhance an uncomplicated and un-duplicated transition process.

Meeting the Need

Over the past three years, we have learned much from our grant activities. As we acquired new and better information about needs, the original grant activities have evolved and progressed to new levels. This summary highlights significant achievements over the past three years, but focuses mainly on current activities which are an outgrowth of work over the previous two years.

The Results

1993-94

- Implemented student mentorship training on transition.
- Educated students and staff on how to use the Transition Information Planning System (TIPS), a computerized transition planning process.
- Used exit files for students to take their transition information with them when they graduated and trained students and staff on how to use them.
- Provided training for school building teams on collaboration and resources for students and families.

1994-95

- Addressed attendance at IEP meetings by reviewing who attends and then surveying students, parents,

and agencies to find out more about why they do or don't attend IEP meetings; developed a list of suggestions and strategies that was disseminated to IEP team members and other school and agency staff.

- Identified the benefits of connecting fourteen-year-old students to agencies and services by reviewing information from a middle school dropout prevention project; developed a transition resource brochure that has been distributed to all school and agency staff, as well as parents and students.
- Identified a post-school process with a coordinated plan for obtaining services and supports, particularly for students not eligible for Rehabilitation Services or County Social Services; this included a listing of nontraditional resources made available in non-school settings such as libraries and community centers.

1995-96

- Found that transition often didn't appear in IEP goals; good materials were available but were not being used to their potential; parents and teachers needed to be made more aware and knowledgeable, especially in the area of agency resources.
- Two trainings were held one week apart - an inservice training for teachers on the new IEP form and available resources in the community and a transition resource fair for parents and students.
- In order to market the trainings, the CTIC provided stipends to schools for mailings and paper.
- Each inservice included unique rewards for attending: teachers received CEUs when they filled out evaluations on the training; the first thirty parents and students to register for the fair received gift certificates; everyone was eligible for hourly door prizes.
- Student attendance was significant due to numerous and persistent mailings to their homes reminding them of the training and inviting them to attend.
- Follow-up was provided through the use of three-ring agency resource notebooks; these were developed, distributed, and inserviced by CTIC members to every school with students aged fourteen to twenty-two.

Reflections

Much thought and deliberation went into marketing activities to gain the greatest participation possible. The following ideas helped to make the final year of our project very successful:

- CTIC members participated in both the IEP training and the Transition Resource fair. Their involvement created a sense of ownership and reward for the time put into activities.
- CTIC members were careful to gather information from staff, parents, and students about what types of training and information would best meet their needs. This information helped the CTIC to support activities that staff and families wanted, that people were motivated to attend, and that met their actual needs. It also increased the motivation of CTIC members during planning and implementation.
- When marketing for the transition fair, multiple mailings and follow-up were used to increase the likelihood that students and parents would attend. An invitation was mailed out one month and again one week before the fair and then phone calls were made the night before to encourage students to attend.
- CTIC members involved neighborhood businesses by approaching them for contributions of door prizes and treats. This not only got them involved and interested in what was happening, but also gave students and parents a chance to actually use coupons and gift certificates because they were locally owned and operated.
- CTIC members developed and coordinated the agency resource notebooks and were responsible for presenting training to each of the twenty-five school programs on how to use the notebooks. This was critical to effective information sharing.

Northern Lights CTIC

1995-1996

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 6-14

Unique Features

Tapping into the expertise of various interagency personnel.

Co-conceptualizing a new paradigm of service delivery to children with disabilities.

Collaborative initiative drawing together the energies of the Interagency Early Intervention Committee, the Local Coordinating Council, and the CTIC for children's mental health across three counties and ten school districts.

Overview

The Cloquet Area Special Education Cooperative (CASEC) covers a hundred-square-mile geographical region that includes ten school districts. Each district has its own unique transition service delivery system. Because of these logistics, services to young adults with disabilities are often fragmented and lack the cooperative effort essential to effective interagency planning. Even more significant is the gap in any type of services to students with disabilities between the ages of six and fourteen - what has been typically called the "black hole" of service delivery. We decided to focus on developing a local Systems Improvement Design Team, to begin addressing the needs of children with disabilities aged six to fourteen. Our hope was that our efforts would eventually address the needs of all children with disabilities, from birth through age twenty-two, in our local communities.

The Need

Historically, significant confusion has existed among social services case managers and special education case managers about when other agencies should become involved in planning for transition. Conflicts frequently arose about who should pay for significant services needed by each child. Adult service providers were often unaware of the needs of younger students with disabilities. In many cases, there wasn't sufficient time to address budget and program planning. Such conflict strained collaborative relationships and delayed or interrupted delivery of important services to our primary

consumers: *children*. It's essential that we address problems and concerns with service delivery in our local system and work toward meeting the needs of all children with disabilities in our community. For this reason, we felt this was a critical area which required attention through the development of our Systems Improvement Design Team.

Meeting the Need

- **Systems Improvement Design Team:** A design team was assembled with representatives from our local CTIC, IEIC, and LCC; this team developed a work plan for the year and met monthly for half-day meetings during the grant period.
- **Collaborative Project:** A collaborative project was identified consisting of improving interagency support and planning for children with disabilities ages six to fourteen who have an individual education plan (IEP).
- **Project Activities:** The following is a summary of our experimental interagency planning process:
 - CASEC coordinators were approached by the CTIC Grant Advisory Group and asked to take a leadership role in implementing a small, experimental interagency planning process.
 - Coordinators were asked to nominate a special education teacher and then agree to mentor that teacher through a family-centered process of planning and interagency service coordination by using

a provided training packet. Special education teachers were then asked to nominate families to participate in the process.

- Teachers were given data privacy forms to be used for inviting and involving the county social worker; action planning forms were used for taking notes during the interagency IEP meeting with case coordinators; the use of these forms was explained to other planning members.
- Special education teachers arranged the interagency IEP meeting, conducted the interagency planning, and accessed the local social worker during meetings to address non-IEP concerns.
- Staff and families were interviewed to determine how the process went, CASEC coordinators met separately to talk frankly about the process, and members of the Northern Lights CTIC made recommendations for future revisions and continuation based on these evaluation outcomes.

The Results

This population - children ages six to fourteen who have disabilities and their families - is typically not offered interagency planning by the school-led IEP team. This project has been the first effort to do so locally. Results include:

- IEP managers learned how to offer the family-centered approach to interagency planning as part of the IEP development meeting; CASEC special education coordinators served as mentors to teachers interested in this approach;
- Interagency planning moved toward an integration of multiple planning processes through different agencies that have been used separately in the past;
- Many of our committees provided similar services separately, which could be done together. An example was to provide a central resource directory for all families and children with disabilities; *and*
- Results have been shared with the CTIC, the local IEIC, and the Children's Mental Health Local Coordinating Council.

Reflections

- It's important to understand each other's agency and what can be provided through their service delivery systems.
- As members of a systems improvement team, it takes time to build relationships and comfort levels among all members.
- Thoughtful planning takes time.
- It's important to start small and to build-in success in order to gain acceptance and create an environment where change can occur.
- It was interesting to learn that there are different definitions, expectations, and understandings of the family-centered approach to interagency service planning and delivery.

Northland CTIC

1994-1995

Contact

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Age Range Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Student participation in Community Education.

Train-the-trainer model and resource libraries.

Our large geographic area: we have fifteen junior and/or senior high schools in our cooperative.

Overview

Based on a 1993-94 local CTIC survey, we found a need to continue improving involvement of students and families in our transition planning system, especially at the community level. We set a goal of developing a new and improved system of training, resource distribution, and continuing education for students, families, and professionals to improve the success of transition service delivery.

The Need

A specific need was found in the area of enhancing local existing Community Education programs to serve young adults with disabilities in transition from school to adult life. Continued training on transition for families and students was also clearly indicated, as well as a need for an organized, easily accessible method for making transition resources available to students, parents, and professionals.

Meeting the Need

In order to meet the identified needs, the Northland CTIC followed several routes:

- **Enhancing Community Education Programs:** CTIC members planned to work with Community Education directors to enhance

classes and trainings offered through local Community Education programs to increase the involvement of students with disabilities. Traditionally, student involvement was limited to recreation and leisure activities as this was what was offered. Assistance with transportation and tuition was provided as needed.

- **Training for Students, Families, & Professionals:** A transition team consisting of service providers, educators, parents, and students was trained in the five core areas of transition. This core team was scheduled to train local transition specialists in each of the eleven school districts served by the CTIC. The goal was to make this a continuous training event as new people came into the system and others left. The CTIC made money available to support parent and student attendance at transition training events by paying for transportation, child care, and tuition.
- **Transition Resource Libraries:** Each of the eleven school districts represented by the CTIC had its own transition resource library established to assist in making materials more readily available and accessible for transition planning. An additional set of materials was made available at the Arrowhead Library System to be accessed by anyone in the community.

The Results

- Fifteen transition resource libraries were established - one for each school in the Northland Cooperative. The Arrowhead Library System catalogued the master set of transition resource materials and made this available to the general public, in addition to listing it in their computer system. This was an ongoing, long-term project that was continually updated. Libraries in the schools are most accessible to the students and families and also closest to the professionals who use them most.

- Community Education directors were invited to CTIC meetings to discuss their concerns and to talk about issues that might enhance student participation such as improved transportation, help with tuition, or adaptations to classes. Information about what was available through Community Education was distributed to students through their teachers. This gave students a new way to learn, meet friends, and enhance their life skills for transition to work and adult life.
- Many different training events were held and made available to students, families, and professionals. Some were sponsored by the CTIC and others were sponsored at the state level. The training gave people a chance to meet others with similar issues and to receive information about what may or may not work with regard to transition planning. It also gave CTIC members a chance to update families on the latest information on transition and special education.

Reflections

- It's very hard to make changes. We quickly learned that our most difficult project would be the one related to Community Education. Trying to meet with all Community Education directors was, logistically, not always possible. Trying to adapt and change Community Education promotional brochures to advertise opportunities to students was even more challenging.
- The most encouraging finding was parent interest. The hardest group to get involved was students. This might be due to issues surrounding self-confidence, but might also be due to the fact that they're busy with other commitments such as sports, church, and homework.
- It's important to use all forms of media to get information out correctly because poor marketing can adversely affect a project's success.
- It was surprising to learn just how many people aren't aware of what transition is, what CTICs do, and what they stand for. However, it was reassuring to find that there were other parents, providers, and interested people who were there when we really needed them.
- The biggest factor we had to contend with was the geographic size of our special education cooperative. Trying to accommodate travel issues was very difficult, especially in the winter!

Northwest Hennepin CTIC

1994-1996

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 16-22

Unique Features

The student involvement in meetings, committees, and student connection activities.

The Parent Retreat Event for a weekend of learning, meeting with other parents, and relaxing.

The connection with businesses by offering tours to students and following up with classroom activities.

Overview

The Northwest Hennepin CTIC developed and implemented a pilot project over a two-year period. The intent of the Northwest Hennepin CTIC was to develop a system of transition service delivery that would:

- Support and assure the involvement of families in their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP);
- Promote the involvement of students with disabilities in their own transition planning, both at the individual and community levels; *and*
- Train business leaders in the community on disability awareness, sensitivity training, and hiring persons with disabilities.

The Need

The Northwest Hennepin CTIC had a history of leadership in the area of collaborating with students and parents to improve transition planning in our local community. We believed that family and student involvement was the key to successful transition planning. Although our CTIC was fairly successful in this area, we felt it was necessary to take the next step to develop and implement a solid, ongoing system of support to secure the long-term investment of students and parents.

Meeting the Need

Over the past two years, the Northwest Hennepin CTIC addressed this issue by splitting into teams and appointing leaders to each team to oversee activities and accomplishment of goals. We focused on three priority areas:

- **Parent Retreat Committee:** This team represented efforts of parents, school districts, and agency representatives. The goal of this team was to provide parents of students with disabilities an opportunity to network with other parents, gather information and receive training on the five areas of transition, and to have a "mini-vacation" in the process. Parents were charged a minimal fee for two days of training, meals, and a hotel stay. The remainder of costs were secured through donations by member agencies and the community at large.
- **Student Retreat Committee:** This team represented efforts of school members, agency representatives, and student members of the CTIC. The goal was to organize and present four full-day student retreats during the school year for interested students from our CTIC area. The primary focus of the retreats was transition skill awareness and development in the five transition areas, self-advocacy, and rights and responsibilities in the IEP process. A variety of speakers, materials on transition, and resources were available to students at each retreat.
- **Student Career Exploration and Recognition Event:** This team represented efforts of our school districts, community organizations, and students with disabilities who were members of the CTIC. The goal was to organize four business tours for interested students and to provide a recognition event for the

students and businesses involved. Tours were selected based on the results of student surveys that identified their first and second preferences of occupations.

The Results

- **Parent Retreat:** Forty-six parents participated in retreats held in March of 1995 and March of 1996. The retreats included humorous skits by family participants, networking time for parents to connect with other parents, motivational speakers, break-out sessions on funding, and presentations by a student panel. Parent comments were extremely positive.
- **Student Retreat:** Three to four retreats took place each year at community regional park facilities. The topic of self-advocacy was the thread that ran through all retreat presentations and was the focus of much discussion. Retreats presented a variety of materials and resources that dealt with transition skills and related issues. Students were encouraged to make the most of the opportunity to develop a "social network." Highlights included presentations by Winelle Carpenter, a learning disabilities consultant and person with a learning disability, who spoke on the importance of determining your own unique learning style and how to advocate for your learning needs; Heidi Horak, a former student and person with a learning disability, who spoke on the importance of self-advocacy and the determination to meet your goals; Randy Shaver, a sportscaster and anchor for the RARE 11 television station, who spoke of his personal experience of living with a sibling with a disability and the importance of recreation and leisure in people's lives.
- **Career Exploration and Recognition Event:** Approximately forty students attended one or more of the four business tours each year. By involving students from each of the different schools, we hoped students would have an opportunity to meet and develop new friendships. Following tours, students had the chance to talk with and question staff at the businesses. Students were given information regarding the company before the tour, and information was assembled to be reviewed with the students to help them prepare for the tours. At the recognition event, students were given participation certificates and employers were given framed certificates of appreciation for their participation. A guest speaker, Terry Egee from the Reliastar Foundation, addressed what employers look for when hiring.

Reflections

- All planning for these types of activities was intensive, requiring the steadfast commitment of team members. It required team members to be creative and flexible in implementing and achieving goals.
- It was important to have a variety of representatives on each team: parents weren't the only planning members on the parent retreat team!
- Collaboration with the community was essential and began with building sincere relationships. When team members communicated our vision to community representatives, resources began to flow.
- As we end this grant year, our teams know that every exit is an entrance to somewhere else. These words capture our journey together as we begin future endeavors.

Owatonna CTIC

1995-1996

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 18 and older

Unique Features

Interagency collaboration between the school system, Rehabilitation Services, regional employment agency, parents, and independent living facility to develop, distribute, and collect results of our survey.

Overview

There have been great improvements in addressing the post-high school needs of students with disabilities in our community. However, feedback from parents, students, graduates, and teachers indicated a need to improve opportunities for students to develop skills in the areas of independent living, transportation, recreation and leisure activities, and vocational training.

We also found a need to review the traditional high school curricula being offered to students with disabilities to determine to what extent these classes actually met students' needs. Our grant proposed to develop a process for evaluating the current services and future needs of students with disabilities in the Owatonna school system.

The Need

Parents, teachers, community service providers, and CTIC members concluded there was very little purpose in students' involvement with required general course work. In fact, their needs could be better served through participation in curricula designed to meet their post-high school goals. Students were offered independent living skills training in the classroom environment, but on a limited basis.

Meeting the Need

A survey was developed by a CTIC sub-committee using some of PACER (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights) Center's questions and formatting from their transition survey, as well as including additional information developed by CTIC members. The survey was designed to include input from parents, current students, graduates, and adult service providers to assess current skills, currently available programs, needed programs, and to determine future training needs. Items addressed by the survey included job readiness, college or vocational schooling, social issues, independent living skills, and medical knowledge and skills.

The Results

The Owatonna CTIC surveyed one hundred twenty-five graduates and dropouts. The mail survey was answered by twenty-four people. Overall, it appeared that most of those who responded were pleased with the services being provided to students with disabilities at Owatonna High School. Highlights include:

- **Job Readiness:** Thirteen people responded that they didn't know what kind of job they wanted when they left high school. Seven students answered that they didn't know of information that could assist them with finding a job. Six students answered "no" when asked whether they felt they could tell co-workers and employers about their disability.
- **College or Vocational Schooling:** Thirteen answered that they didn't apply to a college or vocational program upon leaving high school. Thirteen also replied "no" when asked if they knew how to receive assistance from Rehabilitation Services for schooling. Again, there were six who responded that they didn't know how to explain their disability to others.
- **Social Activities:** Questions revolved around issues such as telling people about their disability, under-

standing if people treated them differently because of their disability, meeting new friends, dating, issues surrounding sexuality and birth control, and social activities. Most respondents answered questions surrounding friends positively. Concerns regarding how to approach Owatonna High School's ability to address areas like dating have since arisen.

- **Independent Living:** A question related to understanding one's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act received the highest number of negative responses - fifteen former students answered "no." Eight former students didn't know how to go about getting Supplemental Security Income or Medical Assistance benefits.
- **Medical Knowledge:** All respondents answered positively when asked about understanding how to call by phone for help. Again, knowledge regarding Social Security Income received eleven negative responses.

Reflections

- The Owatonna CTIC members believe we need to re-think what questions we truly sought to answer. It might have been better to focus on special education information given out to students at Owatonna High School. One recommendation was to start with current curricula and then devise survey questions based on what was taught, what was learned, and whether it was useful or not. Conclusions based on this information might have had a different sense of importance and a stronger impact on the school situation. It's likely that the survey results would have been the same, but their usefulness may have been enhanced.
- Our survey questions didn't universally apply to all respondents. This created a danger in assessing all "no" answers as if they were problems that needed to be addressed.
- Some students indicated that they believed they didn't have a disability and didn't retain information that may have been useful to them later.
- Identical items within the survey received different responses, indicating some intra-test reliability problems.

Rochester CTIC

1994-1996

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Students learned practical self-advocacy skills.

Used trained transition facilitators to teach skills to students.

Coordinated with an off-campus transition program.

Overview

In the spring of 1994, the Rochester CTIC sponsored a parent/teacher workshop. Feedback from that workshop indicated that information and resources for transition planning needed to be identified and available on an ongoing basis throughout the transition planning years. An increase in requests for advocacy services by both parents and professionals supported this. In addition, information from the Rochester post-school follow-up survey indicated that although information on transition planning was available, it was available inconsistently and only when requested on specific issues. Our project focused on addressing the ongoing need for technical assistance, individual support, information dissemination, and resources for transition planning for all of those involved with students in transition. The goal was to develop a smooth process for all students with disabilities and to improve their preparation for adult life.

The Need

We found that transition planning for students occurred at different levels depending on several factors: age, school, Individual Education Plan (IEP) manager, and disability. Students with developmental disabilities tended to have a more complete transition plan than students with learning, physical, or other disabilities. Students in high school tended to have transition plans that addressed all five areas of transition, as compared to middle school students who had

plans that addressed some but not all of these. Factors that contributed to this fragmented approach may have included limitations in the following areas:

- Knowledge for implementing a working transition plan;
- Awareness of community resources and agencies;
- Knowledge of legislation related to transition planning and writing goals; *and*
- Access to ongoing support and information for specific transition issues.

Meeting the Need

The Rochester CTIC included a number of activities to address the following issues:

- **Transition Facilitators:** We used transition facilitators to support IEP teams in the development and implementation of effective and meaningful transition plans for students with disabilities. Facilitators worked with students to question their desires and to broaden the awareness of the team's need to increase student involvement in the planning process. Facilitators used a specific self-determination curriculum to share information with families and to assist them with learning strategies to encourage self-determination and decision making skills in their children with disabilities.
- **Adult Mentors:** Adults with disabilities served as transition facilitators. They were made available to students as mentors to help them gain confidence in their ability to make choices and decisions, and to share their opinions with team members.

- **Transition Manuals:** Transition manuals were made available to teachers as a resource. Easy access to transition facilitators was made available throughout the school year.
- **Person-Centered Planning:** Olmstead county began to implement person-centered planning for adults with developmental disabilities. Individuals met with their support staff, friends, and family prior to their annual meetings to identify areas of concerns as well as goals they wanted to accomplish in the upcoming year.
- **Self-Advocacy Training:** Students received training in self-advocacy and decision making through school curricula and with the assistance of a self-advocacy consultant. The consultant also consulted with and made presentations to teachers. A People First advocacy chapter was established at the high school.

The Results

- Communication, as well as the Rochester CTIC's relationship with community transportation, recreation and leisure providers, and community education, was greatly improved.
- Interagency recognition of the value of community-based learning and skills training was increased.
- Community services such as the license bureau, public library, transportation options, the mayor's office became much more accessible.
- Understanding of program options with day training/habilitation programs and residential providers resulted in collaborative planning and improved communication.

Reflections

- It was invaluable to base our training and student activities in the community, rather than isolating them within a school setting.
- Student skills weren't really understood or known until looked at in the context of real-life settings in the community.
- The growth and self-confidence in the students was tremendous: we saw increased independence and self-esteem through participation in project activities.
- Given the chance, students can and will plan ahead and carry through with their responsibilities.
- We were able to expand our teaching strategies and the way we think of teaching with students due to the community-oriented nature of our project. It also resulted in volunteer opportunities for students.

Root River Interagency Committee

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Birth-22

Unique Features

Addressing the needs of a comprehensive age group: birth through age twenty-two.

An ongoing effort to increase communication and teamwork across all environments within the county.

A genuine desire to develop a functional service network for individuals with disabilities and their families.

1995-1996

Overview

In 1994, in a collaborative effort, local members of the community transition interagency and interagency early intervention committees merged to form the Root River Interagency Committee (RRIC). The merger came about because committee members recognized the need to provide a continuity of service that currently didn't exist for families of children with disabilities. Young children were served by one committee, transition age students by another, and intermediate students were missed altogether. RRIC felt the past approach was inefficient and a disservice to families and students. The goals of this grant project included:

- Identifying weak areas of service;
- Increasing the participation of students as leaders in their service planning; *and*
- Raising awareness and participation in the community at large.

The Need

Discussion and contacts with parents, students, educators, service providers, and committee members revealed the following issues:

- Students with severe disabilities were being served well, but students with less severe or less visible disabilities - such as learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disabilities - were not receiving the scope of services available, especially in the area of transition. Students and families often didn't realize they were even eligible for services.
- The level of participation by parents and students was low. Factors included lack of knowledge about services, intimidation, paperwork, lack of self-determination skills, and lack of community support.
- Duplication of services provided by various agencies resulted in an inefficient use of resources, increased work loads, and was very confusing to students and families.
- No one person or agency coordinated an individual's plan, allowing for duplication and other problems.
- There was a lack of general awareness not only among parents and students, but among educators, service providers, and community members regarding the needs of children with disabilities and the services available to meet their needs.

Meeting the Need

The RRIC implemented the following activities to accomplish our goals:

- Special Project Coordinator: RRIC hired a highly-skilled coordinator who was experienced and knowledgeable about special education and related services in the community. She ensured that project coordination continued in an efficient and timely manner.
- Consumer/Provider Surveys: Surveys were developed by using existing surveys with amendments

made to fit specific community needs. The coordinator worked with a sub-committee to receive input from all RRIC members.

- Parent Mailing List: A mailing list of parents interested in transition and related services was developed by sending out releases to every parent with a child with an IEP in Fillmore County.
- Community Resource Booklet: RRIC felt it would be essential to update and reprint our interagency resource booklet entitled *Resources for Families in Fillmore County*.
- Workshop: A day-long workshop for parents, students, and professionals called *Building Our Strengths Together* was offered to motivate and inform everyone about being leaders in planning and understanding the planning process.

The Results

- Surveys were slowly returned. Final analysis wasn't completed by the end of the grant period but will be available by winter of 1996-97.
- The mailing list was developed as parents returned their release forms. Releases were mailed in conjunction with an invitation to a summer picnic sponsored by RRIC. A substantial number of parents returned the releases, which indicated an interest in receiving additional information.
- The *Resource Booklet* was amended and revised, as the original edition was three years old and needed updating. Distribution of the resource guide included schools, health fairs, social service agencies, workshops, and resource centers.
- Information improved parents' and students' abilities to self-advocate and participate actively in their service plans. Education and awareness of individuals, parents, and service providers was of vital importance in effective service provision.
- The workshop for parents, students, and service providers was very successful. Guest speakers and a presentation by CLIMB Theatre were highlights of the day. Workshop evaluations indicated the audience would like further opportunities to receive additional information and that the material presented would be used and shared with others. Community resource personnel were on hand to answer questions and to share information with attendees.

Reflections

- The project coordinator crossed over into many areas of the project and ensured that activities were being completed. Having a paid, professional coordinator relieved RRIC members of having to take on this responsibility in addition to their full-time jobs and also provided a central key contact for everyone involved.
- Change within the education process was extremely difficult! Teachers and service providers wanted to provide the best service possible, but were often overworked, had limited financial or other resources, and lacked information and training needed to be as effective as they wished.
- Individuals must have a vested interest in the service process and in systems change - parents and professionals want to know how it can help them. Without incentive, motivation is lacking to make change happen.
- Resources are becoming scarce, which motivates some agencies to pool existing resources and seek creative solutions to fund new options. This can be a major barrier to acquiring necessary services as well.
- Gaps continue to exist, especially in the area of knowledge about resources. RRIC still has a long way to go in meeting the needs of the entire target population, but our motivation and desire to succeed is strong.

Rum River Special Education Cooperative

1993-1994

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Used the computerized Transition Information Planning System (TIPS) to assess and plan transition goals with students and families.

Reprogrammed the TIPS disk to make it more user-friendly.

Trained staff to use the process with both students and families.

Overview

During the 1992-93 school year, educators from several school districts in the Rum River Special Education Cooperative (RRSEC) participated in training activities using the Transition Information and Planning System (TIPS) model. TIPS is a microcomputer software program that allows educators to gather longitudinal follow-along data on students, as well as to collect and evaluate post-school outcomes of the students served in special education. The goal of this demonstration site project was to reinforce the use and enhance the performance of the TIPS program within the Rum River Co-op.

The Need

Six special education teachers had received training using TIPS at the time this grant was obtained. Two key issues still remained:

- Training opportunities needed to be expanded to include more educators and a wider range of participants from social services and vocational rehabilitation; *and*
- Training needed to include a long-range focus that would enable teachers and service providers to adopt this planning process as part of the routine planning strategy used in the cooperative.

A transition process needed to be created that clearly defined the responsibilities of interagency personnel charged with meeting the post-secondary needs of students. RRSEC planned to use TIPS as a vehicle or tool to create a transition process with ready-made components for a successful transition services model.

Meeting the Need

Activities conducted to meet the goal of this grant included:

- Transition Training: Four intensive half-day trainings on how to do transition training were held. Two focused on using the TIPS computerized system as a tool for transition planning using hands-on instruction, one focused on assessment for transition, and one focused on how to involve students and families in a transition process that was student-led and family centered.
- Workshops: A second set of workshops was offered to those who didn't wish to go through all four half-day trainings but wanted to learn strategies for improving the transition planning process.
- Needs Assessment: Information was collected on the post-school needs of students served in participating districts throughout the year after trainings are completed. The post-secondary training and learning report from the TIPS program actually identified future student goals as well as helped to make comparisons with actual student performance.
- Educator Network: A network of educators provided information and served as resource persons on how to use the TIPS planning process.

The Results

- Four half-day trainings were held to introduce staff and other service providers to the TIPS program, assessment tools and strategies, and how to have a student-led, family-centered planning process. Feedback on the training was positive, but led the CTIC to conclude that the training sessions were not extensive enough, especially on how to use the computerized planning program.
- It became apparent to the group that there was a need to discuss the issue of preparing middle school and junior high aged youth for the transition planning process. Including more educators who served this group of youth with disabilities, many of whom turn age fourteen, was important to establishing a coherent transition program from the middle school level to the high school level.
- Difficulty was experienced in using the TIPS computer program, due largely to problems related to programming issues and the complexity of using the program. A second set of workshops was held to concentrate efforts on the TIPS planning process rather than the program itself.
- Three follow-up meetings were held to go through the planning process with teachers, including middle school and junior high special education teachers within the cooperative. The primary objective was to help teachers use the process to generate a transition plan. Each teacher was required to select one family with whom to work through the TIPS planning process. Teachers were given the option of using a hand-written format from the TIPS program: most chose to use this method rather than the computer.
- Most of the TIPS planning was conducted with students at the middle and junior high level with disabilities. Follow-up activities will be conducted in the 1997-98 school year. This will include a portion of the students for which transition plans were developed through this project.

Reflections

- There were some significant problems with the TIPS computer program with regard to "crashing" on the personnel who tried to use the program. Since that time, the program has been revised several times after extensive "de-bugging" and field-testing. Early revisions of this program were shared with personnel with the Minneapolis Public Schools in a joint meeting to review problems associated with the program. The current version of TIPS, called "TIPS 2" is a condensed version of the original program that has been distributed to all the secondary special education staff in the Rum River Special Education. While TIPS 2 hasn't been developed to the point of being ready for sale or marketing, the current version runs much more reliably and shows much promise for future development efforts.
- Training teachers and other service personnel on how to use a computerized planning process takes time - two sessions were definitely not enough to get people up to speed. Some staff didn't use a computer on a regular basis and so just assisting them to learn the computer operations came first.
- It's difficult to get people to change their way of thinking and planning overnight! Many people wanted to simplify their planning process, but the computerized planning program appeared "overwhelming, hard to follow, and would take more time than writing the plan by hand." It takes more time, more exposure, and a program that's definitely "up and running" to convince the majority of people to take the leap.
- It will be important to get support from administrators and those who have the authority to make decisions about changing processes, strategies, and planning tools.
- This type of program requires the kind of access to computers that not all schools, personnel, and service providers have. It may require purchasing new equipment which may in turn require higher levels of funding. One idea is to teach students how to use the program and how to help write their own plans, since most students are taught to use and have access to computers in their school.

Runestone Area CTIC

1995-1996

Contact

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Runestone Area Education District
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320/763-5559

Age Groups Served

Ages 14-18

Unique Features

We had input from former students on the design and implementation of our project.

We developed a Transition Orientation Team made up of parents, students, educators, and agency representatives.

We learned everything we needed to know for survival!

Overview

A parent sub-committee of the Runestone Area CTIC conducted a parent survey and its results guided the goals for this project. CTIC members and others worked hard to distribute information and held inservices for teachers to increase knowledge about the transition planning process. However, the Runestone CTIC felt another system should be tried to get everyone thinking and planning from the same framework. The goal of our project was to establish a system for ensuring that families of students with disabilities were involved in transition planning at the individual and community levels.

The Need

Most parents returning the CTIC's survey reported not getting information about transition, nor did they feel that they had been made a part of the transition planning process. The process our CTIC implemented to change the way transition planning is done in our community included development of:

- A transition pamphlet and resource manual;
- A questionnaire for parents addressing the IEP meeting process;
- A sequence of transition activities for students in ninth through twelfth grade;
- Assessment information and planning procedures to use with students and teachers; *and*
- Transition planning folders for all students in ninth through twelfth grade.

We also needed to implement a process to coordinate all of the resources, planning processes, and activities. Our CTIC developed a Transition Orientation Team made up of parents, students, educators, and agency representatives. This team went to individual districts at the beginning of the year to meet with resource teachers, parents, and students. The services they provided gave an official start to transition, provided information, and taught everyone what to expect from the transition planning process.

Meeting the Need

Steps taken to ensure the success of our planning process included:

- Providing technical training to the orientation team about the materials and information, as well as the approach to use when presenting.
- Developing an organizer notebook for parents and students that included information on high school transition planning and post-secondary transition planning.
- Researching available literature and resources to include in our notebook along with purchasing available videos for use by parents, students, service providers, and at orientation presentations.

The Results

We realized that in order to achieve the goal of increased family involvement, we needed to increase the involvement of parents in general. Efforts directed at this goal included a newspaper article on transition

planning and the CTIC, an appearance on a local radio show, and attendance by CTIC members at a variety of local disability support groups. Attendance varied anywhere from three to twelve parents, some of whom were very consistent and reliable. Other outcomes from our activities included:

- Regular meetings with students, parents, agency personnel, teachers, and other representatives from the community.
- The creation of a transition lending library which was available to students, parents, teachers, and other service providers.
- The creation of a newsletter on transition planning and services directed toward Runestone Education District students and parents. The purpose of the newsletter was to keep students and parents informed of student events, educational sessions, training opportunities, information necessary for transition planning, and available resources.
- The development of a training team to spread the word about transition planning for students with disabilities and to increase student and parent involvement.
- The development and implementation of an organizer notebook for students to keep important information in. This notebook was designed for students to take with them and continue to use after graduation and included input from parents and students, as well as a parent of a student who had graduated and could give advice from hindsight.

Reflections

- We established a parent involvement group and a network of volunteers to help maintain the momentum established during the grant project. A few dedicated core people were enthusiastic about the concept and have worked to help it continue.
- We learned that more communication and cooperation between parents, schools, interagency people and students was necessary for a transition project to be successful. Parents reminded professionals that communication needed to happen in language they could understand.
- Parents really blossomed with encouragement and were soon stopping the meetings to ask for explanations. Parents became active participants rather than an audience and provided excellent insight and suggestions. We all learned that the project was much more useful with input from the recipients.
- The greatest discovery was the available resources in the community which were accessed at little or no cost. By presenting at local clubs and organization meetings, we began to develop a listing of people and resources that provide everything from adult mentors to funding in all areas of transition. The local garden club volunteered to enlist students to help on the garden tour and supervise students working on the new community garden at the library. Other organizations donated prizes, funding, and a location to hold a student event.
- It was great to see the direction of the project shift from professionally-dictated to parent- and student-directed.

Suburban Ramsey County CTIC

1994-1995

Contact

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Harmony Education Center
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Maplewood, MN 55109
612/770-4744*

Age Groups Served

Ages 14-15 and families

Unique Features

Process established/or involving the special education administration.

Addressed the transition needs of younger students.

Involved students with disabilities and their families as mentors for young and older students and their families.

Overview

The Suburban Ramsey CTIC project focused on how to actively and effectively involve families and students in the transition planning process. Despite past success in this area, our CTIC recognized that we didn't have an effective process in place to support this and make it an integral part of our transition planning system. The goal of this project was to develop and implement a formalized system for early outreach by CTIC members to families with fourteen- and fifteen-year-old students with disabilities called the CTIC Family Network.

The Need

Family involvement in the transition planning process for students with disabilities has long been recognized as a key component in the identification and achievement of successful post-school outcomes. The Suburban Ramsey County CTIC membership includes representatives from four large school districts, an intermediate district, one small district, Rehabilitation Services, Ramsey County Adult Services, advocacy organizations, parents, and other service providers. In spite of its large geographic region and the diversity of CTIC members, the committee discovered a common, pivotal challenge emerging during our yearly planning process: how to effectively engage families in the transition process. Members agreed unanimously to focus attention and planning energies toward the establishment of a functional, effective system for assuring family involvement during the transition planning of students with disabilities.

Meeting the Need

All students from all the school districts ages fourteen and fifteen were targeted for this project. It was estimated that five hundred students with disabilities would be fourteen and fifteen years old during the 1994-95 school year. The main activities were designed in anticipation of moving transition beyond an abstract concept and into an exciting real-life experience for students and families. The process designed by the Suburban Ramsey CTIC to begin outreach was three-fold:

- Conducting educational seminars for parents on a variety of transition topics that were identified by the results of a family needs assessment;
- Establishing mentorships between newcomers and post-transition families and students; *and*
- Holding Transition Round-ups, modeled after the familiar Kindergarten Round-up, in each district to officially welcome and introduce fourteen- and fifteen-year-old students with disabilities and their families to the transition planning process.

The Results

We learned a variety of important things when trying to implement this grant project:

- The resources and presentation format for training were excellent for introducing new families to transi-

tion planning. A mass mailing resulted in very low attendance at our five transition trainings. We realized the key was to have IEP managers, special education teachers, or special education administrators issue the invitation, not the CTIC. This was our missing link.

- Special education directors, who had been very active in the beginning years of the CTIC, stepped down and sent classroom teachers to represent them. This was done before a formal communication system had been established to keep information flowing and communication lines open. This issue was resolved by deciding that each district would design its own communication system between the CTIC special education members and the special education director/coordinators. CTIC meeting agendas and minutes were sent to all Directors and posted at strategic points throughout all buildings for other staff.
- The CTIC actively sought the support of IEP managers by having CTIC members attend local district cluster meetings and provide an "inreach" presentation on the CTIC for each district. Our inreach was taped and is available to others to review.
- During the grant year, we found a need to restructure our grant proposal. The fall round-up was replaced by a welcome letter and information packet sent to all families of fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds in special education in the five member school district.
- We were unable to recruit enough families to fully develop our mentor system. We did however, design some good mentor training materials.

Reflections

- Given a purpose, our CTIC membership formed a cohesive unit that exceeded regular meeting level participation and worked effectively and enthusiastically to reach goals.
- Our CTIC members had a wealth of information which was helpful to families - as displayed by the positive evaluations from training sessions.
- Families were in need and wanted basic transition information.
- Parents that attended additional trainings were already informed and actively involved.
- School administrative support was critical to the success of accomplishing CTIC goals.
- Education IEP managers were a crucial link for CTICs and families.
- Project advisory members were an invaluable resource and needed to be utilized.
- Our base group of parents of students with disabilities must be broadened before our mentor program will be successful.

Waseca County CTIC

1994-1995

Contact

Rosalie Grams
Waseca Human Services
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Waseca, MN 56093
507/835-0560

Age Groups Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

The project covered a large rural area.

An interagency agreement was successfully developed.

A connection was made with Extension Services, an agency not usually part of the CTIC team.

Overview

The Waseca County CTIC was interested in developing and expanding local processes for meeting the transition needs of all students with disabilities in our local school districts in collaboration with community services. Barriers faced in Waseca County included:

- A lack of community agencies resident to Waseca County: members of the CTIC included six agency members who were not residents. This created problems with sharing information and making effective referrals.
- The CTIC included three rural school districts with a high turnover rate of personnel. Budget cuts in these districts resulted in the loss of personnel who aided the transition process both directly and indirectly.
- Many programs and services (e.g., service learning, apprenticeships) were either unavailable to our students or in start-up phases. Others (vocational education, centers for independent living) were a long distance from where our students resided. Access to new services or broadening availability was needed.
- Three school districts were served by one special education director and part-time clerical staff who also served other districts. This caused staff shortages for special projects. However, there was an interest in cooperation and expansion of our efforts.

The Need

A major barrier to developing effective transition plans for students with disabilities was the lack of community agencies resident to Waseca County. This created numerous problems, including difficulty in sharing information, lack of accurate knowledge and awareness of what service providers had to offer, and difficulty in making successful referrals for services. Additional issues included the need for a larger array of available services as well as a formalized process to make sure effective referrals and connections were made.

Meeting the Need

The goals of the project were met in four key ways:

- Developing a regional resource directory to assist case managers, students in transition, and parents in locating services and making long-range plans;
- Developing a formal interagency agreement to aid the referral process and to allow for improved cooperation among key agencies;
- Recruiting new member agencies to broaden the scope of cooperation in planning for transition of students with disabilities from school to adult life; *and*
- Using new transition planning tools to improve the effectiveness of tracking students' progress toward meeting their goal, a transition folder was used with each student.

Waseca County Social Services donated twelve hours from a social worker to help with developing and

implementing these activities. Special education donated ten hours of staff time and computer and clerical support, and CTIC members committed their time in other areas to ensure goal completion.

The Results

- A previously developed regional resource directory was updated and made available both in print and on computer disk. This directory and disks were distributed to all member schools and given to all students, staff, and parents seen by transition screening teams. Having the directory available on computer disk allowed for easy replication when printed copies were depleted, as well as the ability to easily update and tailor the directory for specific situations.
- A formal interagency agreement was developed through discussions with the lead agencies of Human Services, Rehabilitation Services, and three member school districts. The agreement was signed by and disseminated to all member agencies on the CTIC. A presentation was made to the county board and each school district board of education regarding use of the interagency agreement.
- The University of Minnesota Extension Service Youth Coordinator was approached to discuss providing a larger array of services for transition in Waseca County. It was found that many services were available and being provided to students of transition age. A stronger connection was made with the extension service youth coordinator which had a positive affect on future referrals and expansion of activities.
- The transition planning folder was purchased, training was provided, and tracking of services provided by case managers was improved by the use of folders with every student in transition. The availability of the planning folder on computer disk was investigated and found to be possible.

Reflections

- We discovered that it's difficult to effect change when member agencies participating on the CTIC do so as an "add-on" to the duties they already have responsibility for in their jobs. This is still a barrier for our CTIC, since we don't have adequate funding to hire someone to act as a transition coordinator and to shepherd the process of transition for our member schools.
- Our future efforts will focus on securing funding to allow us to continue to improve our services as well as to adapt processes developed by other CTICs in the Waseca County area.

Watonwan County CTIC

1994-1995

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 14-19

Unique Features

Addressed the needs of Hispanic students of transition age.

Focused on using the personal futures planning process.

Provided community agency staff training regarding diversity and cultural awareness.

Overview

The Watonwan County CTIC reviewed the make-up of students and families represented within our county. We found a large concentration of Hispanic families, some of whom have children with disabilities. We began by identifying twenty students and their families within this segment of the population that we wanted to provide more support to regarding transition planning and services.

The Need

There was some transition planning taking place within our school system and within agencies that support our students, but much more needed to happen to support families and students with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. We found that the Hispanic youth with disabilities in our community were even more challenged at times by their disabilities combined with cultural differences. The Watonwan CTIC felt the need to improve our service delivery processes, our referral processes, and our planning methods to be responsive to the needs of students from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Meeting the Need

The main goal was for Hispanic students with disabilities to be involved in the personal futures planning process for transition planning. This was done through cooperation between the students, parents, community agencies, and educators who came up with a plan for the future of their students. Activities that became part of this process included:

- Training staff on how to use the personal futures planning process.
- Training staff on how to work with students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds and how to best meet their needs.
- A career night designed to specifically meet the needs of Hispanic students was held in conjunction with the University of Minnesota-Morris, and included adult role models, Hispanic former students, and business leaders from the Hispanic community.

The Results

Through the grant, we had a chance to assist students in beginning to plan their futures. We narrowed the cultural gap by working together with community agencies and, most importantly, the students and their families. Results included:

- Developing a questionnaire that used ideas from the personal futures planning trainings to help parents and students focus on the student's future needs and goals they wish to achieve.
- Holding the transition fair. Our students helped with planning the fair as well as working out transportation to attend the fair. At the time the grant was ending, another Hispanic Career Fair was being planned for the spring of 1996, and the Watonwan CTIC helped to plan for our students to attend this fair.

- Our schools and community seized the opportunity to further educate teachers, service providers, and Watonwan CTIC members on cultural differences.
- Without working on this grant project, our students probably would not have been aware of or participated in the Hispanic Career Fair.

Reflections

- We learned the importance of trying to meet the needs of people of Hispanic culture by understanding their culture and by being accepting, instead of trying to force our cultural ways and ideas on them.
- We want to continue to focus on long-term changes for the Hispanic population of students with disabilities in our community by providing inservices on cultural issues to educators, community agencies, and the community at large.

West Central CTIC

1995-1996

Contact

*Perry Johnson, Transition Coordinator
933 State Road
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320/352-6120*

Age Groups Served

Birth-22

Unique Features

Developed a computerized transition IEP writing system for students from birth to age twenty-two.

Developed a wallet-sized flip booklet for contacting adult services after they graduate from high school.

Developed a handing-off process and exit procedures.

Overview

The West Central CTIC is located in rural Minnesota. Because of this, our CTIC relies heavily on informal lines of communication, referral, and service provision. There are a limited number of formal resources available to students with disabilities in our community as they make the transition from school to adult life. The target goal of this grant was to develop a smooth transition process using inter-agency linkages between the key agencies of education, county social services, and Rehabilitation Services.

The Need

Due to limited resources, students with disabilities are frequently pulled out of their home communities and transplanted into highly-populated areas when they make the transition from high school to post-school activities. Individuals who choose to remain in our community often find few opportunities and services. This is due to the low number of post-graduates residing within our community, which in turn results in a lower demand for services. Based on this knowledge, we developed two main goals:

- We updated our Computerized Individualized Learning Plan (CILP) to reflect the new transition IEP forms and to improve the system of distribution of the CILP to post-secondary case management; *and*
- We developed a self-management system that is simple to use and follow. This assisted with providing management services to individuals with disabilities.

Meeting the Need

The following activities were identified and then implemented:

- A programmer was contracted to adjust CILP to match the new version of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) form.
- A one-time free distribution of the revised CILP took place at a local transition conference.
- Self-advocacy training was provided to students, individuals with disabilities, and their support systems.
- A self-management tool was developed and disseminated which individuals carried with them and used to help solve common problems they encountered due to weak case management. The tool was developed by *On Your Own*, an independent living program in our community. Students helped to develop the tool and identified the most common problems they encountered.
- Copies of this self-management tool were distributed statewide.

The Results

- The CILP had the greatest effect in improving transition for our students. It provided a system of documentation, measurement, and goal setting that was more consistent and thorough than anything we had before. Staff completed more transition related activities due to the organized approach of the software.

- The template was developed using criteria from special education teachers including: user friendly, long-term commitment from the school to continue using the system, ongoing training on how to use it, ability to customize the software, a data bank that met the goal needs of different systems, child count capability, and spell check, among other options.
- The CILP was developed for individuals with disabilities from birth to age twenty-two. A student entering under a county plan could be converted to an Individual Education Plan at the push of a button. The data file could move with the student. After the data was entered, it never needed to be rewritten, only updated. It also included a goal bank which teachers and other service providers could choose to use or not to use. They also could develop their own goal bank to choose from and future goal banks that were created could be shared and exchanged with other teachers.
- CILP also includes a parent/student transition survey as well as a parent input form to identify parental concerns and explore future options.
- An ongoing training plan has been developed to help both DOS and Mac users to be trained side by side and is paid for by local district resources.
- We learned that many of the students with disabilities who graduated had problems with conflict resolution, especially in independent living arrangements. The CTIC brainstormed many solutions to this problem, but most seemed too complex in scope. A suggestion made by the Center for Independent Living about a simple approach used by the *Attention Deficit Order* curriculum solved the problem. We now have the *One Minute Problem Solver* which students use for self-management.
- The long-term effect of the student self-management system will take some time to assess. This is due to the fact that students are just beginning to use the process through the support of the *On Our Own* program. The system developed resembles the holder found in wallets for pictures and business cards, credit cards, etc. Students carry the holder in their pocket, wallet or purse to use for holding resources, important information or other items to help them in their daily independent living.

Reflections

- The problem solving process we developed can be used at all grade levels. We already know that having the ability to reduce conflicts will provide a much better transition to adult life for all students.
- We learned that the quality of the transition IEPs improved with the use of an organized format such as CILP. The difficulty of implementing this project was the lack of computer knowledge among case managers. A computer training program that parallels trained technical assistance would make the implementation much smoother.
- The *On Your Own* program tested many ways of accommodating the advocacy skills of students in transition to community living. This part of the project was more difficult than expected due to the individual needs of each student and the existence of few common experiences among students.

West Metro CTIC

1995-1996

Contact

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CHOICE, Inc.
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Excelsior, MN 55331
612/474-1329

Age Range Served

Ages 14-22

Unique Features

Provided a comprehensive plan relevant for teaching school-to-work curriculum including training manuals, workbooks, hardware, and software.

Involved everyone in a youths "sphere of influence" for transition and career development (i.e., school personnel, agencies, businesses, social workers, DRS, parents, youth, etc.).

Overview

The goal of the West Metro CTIC was to improve the transition success of secondary students with disabilities by collaborating with community services. A new system of change, beginning with a new school-to-work curriculum and coordinated service delivery system would begin to address the needs of our students as they make the transition from school to work and adult life. This was something that wasn't being coordinated or implemented adequately in our education districts when this project began.

The Need

In the spring of 1994, the West Metro CTIC hosted a transition night for parents and students. Evaluation following this effort identified three areas that needed improvement:

- The need to provide parent education and encourage their involvement in the transition planning process. Many of the parents in our community felt the only post-secondary option for their child was a college education. Yet follow-up studies of these students showed that large numbers failed to complete their college work. Service providers wanted to help parents learn of the large menu of options available to assist with choosing the most viable option for post-secondary success.
- The need to coordinate the fragmented delivery system. Teachers, parents, students, and service providers needed to be more aware

of current options in order to meet the many social, psychological, academic, recreational, interpersonal, and long-term career needs of young adults with disabilities.

- Lack of a school-to-work curriculum that more adequately prepared youth for post-secondary success.

Meeting the Need

The grant used a number of activities to change the service delivery system and to improve outcomes for young adults with disabilities:

- **Acquisition and implementation of a school-to-work curriculum called *Communication 2000*:** For years educators from the Minnetonka Independent School District sought to develop a school-to-work curriculum, but the development of such a curriculum, encompassing a vast array of career choices, skills, and appropriate to all grade levels, required significant resources. *Communication 2000* facilitated widespread skill development and motivated students in career exploration and choice of careers. The program included a video, workbooks, an evaluation component, and a software program.
- **Support and education groups for parents and youth:** A facilitator was hired to coordinate a work shop and recruit mentors to form the nucleus of a career-mentorship program for all West Metro CTIC school districts. Participants explored careers and set goals for continuation of the program.
- **Development of a resource directory of transition services:** The resource directory addressed the

five transition areas including career mentorship and job training, post-secondary options, home living, community participation, and recreation/leisure activities. Additional resources such as specific names for business, parent, and student mentors were included.

- Encouragement and support of students and parents to use the *Careers 2000* program as well as the resource directory: Training for parents and youth through IEP meetings and transition nights focused on the development of a work plan to use the resource directory as well as how to access and use the *Communication 2000* program through the computer hardware and software.

The Results

We acquired the *Communication 2000* school-to-work curriculum. The modules are used to assist students to access school-to-work opportunities, plan goals, and to facilitate successful outcomes. The following is a list of the ten modules that were used:

- *Workplace Communication* introduces communication in the workplace and effective skills and strategies for success.
- *Listening and Speaking* teaches students how to listen and speak effectively using both verbal and nonverbal methods.
- *Workplace Writing* teaches clear, concise writing skills as they relate to a wide variety of job tasks.
- *Information in the Workplace* demonstrates how to gather, interpret and use information while on the job.
- *Reading in the Workplace* helps students analyze, evaluate, interpret and apply what they read in documents.
- *Self-Management* focuses on strategies for time management, planning and progression for success and identifying trends in order to adapt to change.
- *Negotiating to Solve Problems* centers on ways to resolve interpersonal conflict in the workplace.
- *Communicating with Co-Workers* examines strategies for communicating appropriately and successfully with co-workers.
- *Communicating with Customers* shows students how to listen and communicate with clients and customers in today's service-oriented marketplace.
- *Communicating in Teams* examines the prevalence of teamwork and how students can make it work effectively.

Our activities also resulted in the following:

- Cultivation of a career mentorship program.
- Fall and Spring parent/youth transition nights.
- Printing of a resource directory based on the five transition areas. The directory is distributed at IEP meetings and transition nights and is updated regularly.
- Student retreats were held which will be the foundation our Student Connection Group.

Reflections

- Resource directories needed frequent updating and were put in a format that facilitated this.
- It took a lot of time and energy to match a student with an appropriate career mentor. We also learned that our peer mentors had tremendous power and influence on our students.
- Earlier intervention and involvement with parents for transition was the most effective.

Winona County CTIC

1994-1995

Contact

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Age Groups Served

Ages 12-22

Unique Features

The model is family-driven.

Skills for self-advocacy and accessing the system of services were learned by families.

Transition services and rights of families were addressed through local CTIC efforts.

Overview

The goal of the Winona County CTIC was to establish a Parent Connection Group. This group was parent-driven and helped to educate families, advocates, and professionals about transition planning issues. Another goal was to have parent representatives who were members of the Parent Connection also serve as members of the Winona County CTIC to increase effective and clear communication between each group.

The Need

At the time this project began, a number of activities had been initiated to help parents become active and involved in transition planning activities, but none had been very successful. Maintaining the commitment of families was a struggle and parents, teachers, community members, and other service providers felt the need to make this a top priority. Other CTICs across the state of Minnesota had developed and implemented Parent Connection Groups. This had proven to be a viable model and the Winona CTIC members felt it would be the best route to follow.

Meeting the Need

The project initially began with a parent survey to find out how many parents were interested in transition issues, as well as the barriers that prevented them from attending meetings in the past. The survey also addressed the issue of preferable meeting days, times, site, and the need for child care assistance. The survey was sent to all families in Winona County who had children aged twelve to twenty-two in any special education program. We received twenty-eight surveys back from interested parents. Based on the information received from the surveys, the third Wednesday of each month from 6:00 to 8:00 PM was selected as the meeting time. A location not associated with the school districts was requested by the majority of parents.

For the first three meetings we had small groups ranging from three to six parents. A core group of three was established and still continues today. The Parent Connection Group provided the following:

- Parents received information about the basics of transition and how to begin life-long planning.
- Parents developed various ways to involve other parents. A telephone tree was established to inform parents of upcoming group meetings. Public service messages through radio and newspapers were used.
- The Winona County CTIC supported these efforts with recommendations and referrals to families who they thought might benefit from the project.
- The CTIC purchased transition resources and literature regarding young adults with disabilities and transition planning, which could be checked out for review through our Transition Resource Library housed at ARC Winona County.
- Parents developed action plans for developing community awareness of the Parent Connection; these plans targeted increasing the awareness of service providers that serve persons with disabilities.
- Parents also attended local CTIC meetings - first to observe and then to participate in later meetings.

Parents suggested that the CTIC meetings were not particularly productive or interesting to parents. The Parent Connection group, in collaboration with the CTIC, then held a joint meeting with a goal of developing efficient and productive CTIC meetings.

The Results

There is currently no recognizable Parent Connection group in operation. Parents that were involved eventually became disillusioned when their efforts to involve other parents were not successful. Rather than have these parents just disappear or become inactive, efforts were made by the CTIC to ensure their involvement in other existing organizations. Parents were assimilated into the ARC Winona County Board of Directors, the Winona County CTIC, and the local Interagency Early Intervention Committee.

The work that was accomplished increased the efficiency and productivity of the Winona County CTIC. The Transition Information Library was also very valuable resource for everyone involved. Although we didn't succeed in recruiting the number of parents we had hoped for, we did manage to increase community awareness regarding transition issues. The work we began made changes structurally as well as internally within the CTIC.

Reflections

- New ways to engage parents must be found. The paradigm of traditional meeting structures didn't work for the parents in our county. Things that may have contributed to the lack of involvement were discussed at great length with no real resolution.
- For a project like this to succeed in a small, rural community such as Winona, there either has to be a very large number of people with a specific need or there has to be a coordinator to bring together small pockets of families and to manage all of the details involved in hooking families up with appropriate resources.
- The amount and quality of the work accomplished through this project was something to be congratulated. Winona County CTIC members were influenced in a positive way regarding parent involvement.